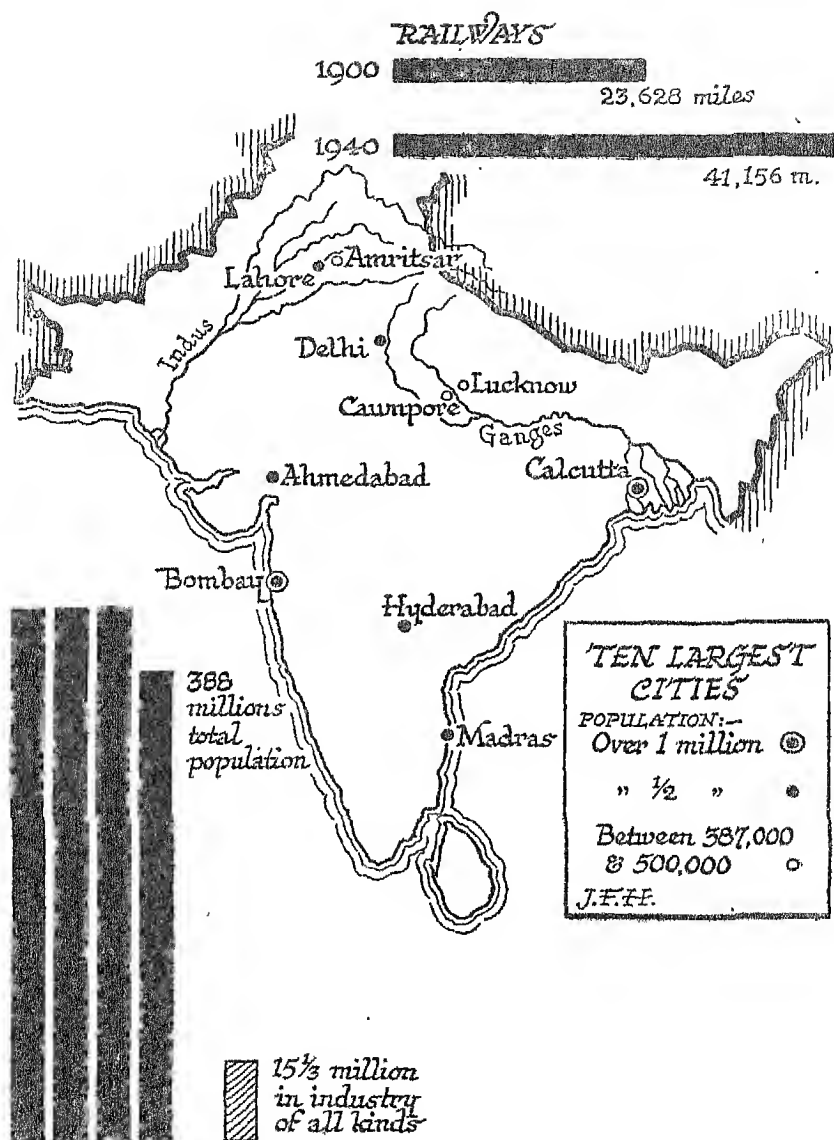


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INDIA

The problem in a nutshell: a sub-continent with a vast population, only a fraction of which is engaged in industry: a country destined to play a great role in the world, but faced with immediate difficulties and an up-hill struggle.

THE
FUTURE OF
INDIA

by
Penderel
Moon

PILOT PRESS
45 Great Russell Street, W.C.1
1945

TARGET FOR TOMORROW SERIES

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF FOUR HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE

I. ECONOMIC

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU has recorded that during a visit to England in 1936 he found "the vast mass of intelligent as well as unintelligent British opinion . . . tired and bored over the Indian question. They had had enough of it, other and much more interesting and important events were happening in the world and they wanted to forget about India, just as, psychologists tell us, our subconscious self makes us forget many an unpleasant occurrence which we would rather not remember." Recent events—the failure of the Cripps mission, the Civil Disobedience Movement of August, 1942, and the Bengal famine—have not made India a more pleasant subject for Englishmen; and other happenings nearer home do not lack interest and importance. Many people in the country must be even more acutely conscious than in 1936 of the tedium inseparable from Indian affairs. Why bother about them, especially now that so many Indian leaders have made it plain that they do not want our interference? Why should people in Britain cram their heads with facts and figures about Hindus and Muslims and their interminable dissensions and try to devise plans and "targets" for India, when the one thing India desires is to be left to settle her own affairs in her own way? Why arrogate to ourselves a thankless task which is really beyond our capacity? "Let Britain plan for herself, by all means," writes Mr. Lionel Fielden. "But to claim that she must plan for a population ten times as great and varied whose beliefs and habits and character are as alien to her own as three thousand years of widely different traditions and associations can make them—that is to claim a white man's burden which India can thankfully do without."

It is certainly true that Britain should no longer claim to plan the destiny of India. The claim has in fact been abandoned. But, however sincerely Britain may promise India "full self-determination" now or immediately after the war, she cannot escape the consequences of the past. After nearly 200 years' association the two countries are so bound up with one another that, whatever Britain may wish or intend, in the mere

process of dissolving or changing that association she cannot avoid profoundly influencing India's future. The people of Britain ought not therefore to be indifferent to India's problems, however difficult or boring they may be, but rather seek to exercise wisely and well an influence which will necessarily be theirs. British wisdom, patience and straight-dealing may, even at this late hour, help to resolve seemingly intractable difficulties and give India a good start on her course as an independent nation. British energy and technical skill may still have a part to play in making "freedom from want" mean something for India's indigent masses. On the other hand British ignorance and prejudice may help to condemn India to the strife and confusion which some of her leaders profess to welcome, and to destroy, perhaps for centuries, the bridge which has been built between East and West.

"Leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance, to anarchy," says Mr. Gandhi, "and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities.* From these a true India will arise in place of the false one we see." But India has a population of nearly 400 million—more than one-sixth of the total population of the world. Other countries cannot disinterest themselves entirely from the fate of so large a fraction of the human race. They cannot be entirely unconcerned at the prospect of 400 million Indians seeking a doubtful salvation through anarchy. Because of her immense size, resources and strategic position, India's problems are world problems. They would be of concern to Britain even apart from her special connection with India. It is proper therefore that there should be in Britain some clear thinking about these problems and about the ways in which Britain can best contribute to their solution.

THE INDIAN HAS A SHILLING FOR THE ENGLISHMAN'S POUND

India is a country of ancient civilisation ; it possesses varied and extensive resources ; the people are industrious and were once renowned for their craftsmanship ; through its intimate connection with Britain the fruits of modern Western science and enterprise have been at its disposal ; and for nearly 100 years there has been peace within its borders. Yet India to-day is conspicuous for its poverty. The mass of its people live in mediæval squalor—underfed, diseased, illiterate, the slaves of custom and of fate. While Western Europe has advanced, India has stagnated. "It enjoys peace with semi-starvation."

Poverty dominates the lives of India's "voiceless millions." Politics mean little or nothing to them. Many of them perhaps care not whether white or brown Brahmans are their rulers. But in their myriad mud villages and in the dark hovels and alleys of their towns poverty is a basic reality.

*Armed robberies.

Figures are a poor substitute for the evidence of the senses ; but figures can give some idea, albeit imperfect, of Indian poverty. Estimates have been made from time to time of the average income per head. They have been the subject of much controversy and show wide variation. Three may be taken as samples. The Simon Commission Report gave a high estimate of 155 shillings per annum. An earlier and much lower estimate of 40 shillings per annum was published by Lord Curzon. Midway stands an official estimate for the year 1931 made by Mr. Findlay Shirras, who put the average annual income at 94 shillings. This may be compared with £94, estimated as the average English income for the year 1930, and suggests the convenient mnemonic that for every shilling in an Indian's purse an Englishman has a pound.

What do these figures mean in terms of living conditions ? It must be remembered that in India less food, clothes and fuel and less substantial housing are required for the adequate support of life than in England. The contrast between an Englishman's pounds and an Indian's shillings is therefore somewhat misleading. But it is a fact that many inhabitants of India never know what it is to have enough to eat. According to a government report for the year 1929-30 a large proportion of them "are living on the very margin of subsistence." This has been expressed more graphically by two Indian economists*— "The average Indian income," they write, "is just enough either to feed two men in every three of the population, or give them all two in place of every three meals they need, on condition that they all go naked, live out of doors all the year round, have no amusement or recreation and want nothing else but food, and that the lowest, the coarsest, the least nutritious."

WHY IS THE INDIAN POOR?

What are the causes of this poverty ? Broadly speaking the answer is simple. India's productivity is low. But what are the reasons for this ?

Are India's natural resources deficient ? In the past India's riches enjoyed a legendary fame ; and even to-day we often read of India's "limitless potential wealth." In actual fact India's resources taken as a whole are respectable rather than extraordinary. The mineral wealth so far as is known at present—a more thorough survey is required—consists principally of coal and iron, manganese, mica and bauxite. But the coal and iron is badly distributed. Nearly all of it is concentrated in Bihar and Western Bengal. It is as though all Europe's coal and iron were concentrated in the Balkans.

Agriculturally India is handicapped by the uncertainty of the rainfall. This applies to both the two main divisions into which the country falls,

*K. T. Shah and K. J. Khambata, *Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India*.

viz. : (1) the Indo-Gangetic plain of Northern India and (2) the Southern peninsula. In the great alluvial Indo-Gangetic plain the soil is for the most part fertile. With adequate rainfall or artificial means of irrigation, all sorts of crops can be grown—wheat, maize, rice, millet, pulses, oil seeds, cotton, sugarcane and tobacco—and in some parts two or even three crops are harvested in one year. But only in the East, in the provinces of Bengal and Bihar, does the rainfall regularly exceed 40 inches, and West of Delhi it falls well below 20 inches. In this region of scanty rainfall large tracts are nothing more than desert and cannot be cultivated at all without heavy expenditure on wells and canals. Still larger areas can only yield inferior crops (e.g., millet and pulses) in the absence of artificial irrigation and fail altogether in bad years.

The southern peninsula is moister. In the coastal belts and fringes the soil is rich, the vegetation tropical, the population dense and the rainfall generally adequate. But much of the upland country of the interior is unfit for cultivation. Its scrub-covered hills support a relatively sparse population, the rainfall is somewhat capricious and for the most part only inferior crops can be grown.

Taken as a whole India cannot compare with the most favoured regions of the world ; but its natural resources are not in themselves so markedly deficient as to afford a complete explanation of the poverty of its people. There are countries much less well endowed by nature, which enjoy a higher standard of living.

Is there something wrong then with the size or character of the population ?

In recent years many writers have expressed alarm at " the devastating torrent of Indian children," and suggested that over-population is the basic cause of Indian poverty. No doubt over-population has a great deal to do with it. But it is important that the relevant facts should be properly understood. Though the population is large (388,998,000 at the 1941 Census) the average density (246 per square mile), is less than in Japan (439 per square mile), and much less than in England and Wales (695 per square mile). Though for over a century the population has been increasing, the rate of increase down to 1921 was much less than in Europe, and even to-day is only about the same as in U.S.A. and less than in the U.S.S.R.

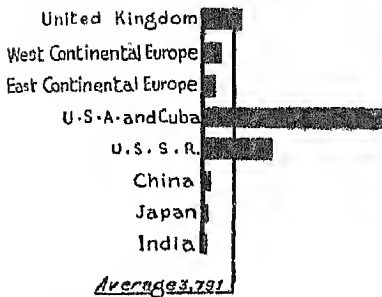
On the other hand the population is distinctly high in relation to the principal known natural resources, as is roughly shown by the diagrams on p. 11.

These diagrams indicate that India, though better off than China or Japan, is decidedly worse off than U.S.A. or U.S.S.R. and about on a par with East Continental Europe, itself admittedly a poor and overpopulated area. It seems probable that in relation to known natural resources India's population is above the optimum ; and it is increasing fast.

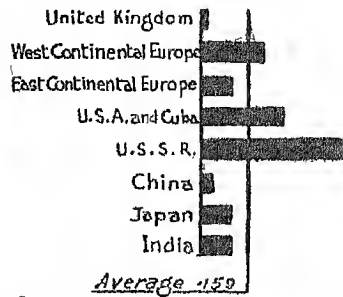
NATURAL RESOURCES PER HEAD

(Estimates refer to the last few years pre-1939)

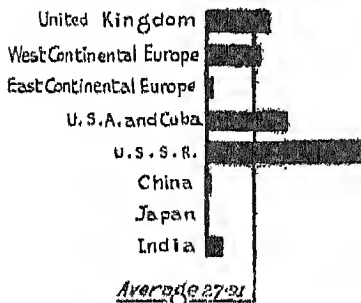
Coal and Lignite Reserves coal equivalent (tons)/(head)



Potential Water Power at ordinary Minimum Flow (H.P.)/(head)



Iron Ore Metal content (tons)/(head)



Arable and other Cultivated land (acres)/(head)



*These figures are taken with the kind permission of Dr. A. J. Brown from the table given on page 21 of his *Industrialisation and Trade*.

Furthermore the average density of the population must be considered very high, having regard to the fact that 70%—75% of the people are dependent on agriculture. Europe (excluding Russia), with a somewhat less dense population, has less than 50% so dependent. Only in the poorer countries of Poland, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia is the percentage as high as in India, and in Western Europe it is well below 40%. Undoubtedly India has too dense a population for a predominantly agricultural country. There is an over concentration in the land.

Herein lies the Real Secret of India's Poverty.

With such a large proportion of such a dense population crowding on to the land the productivity per head is necessarily low.

THE BACKWARDNESS OF AGRICULTURE

Employment in agriculture tends even in the best conditions to be less productive than employment in other ways, e.g., in industry. One reason for this is that whereas in industry a man can be fully employed for 300 days out of 365, the agriculturist, dependent as he is on the processes of nature, *is only fully employed for 200*. Other things being equal the man who works only 200 days in a year will be less productive than one who works 300. India as a predominantly agricultural country suffers from this handicap.

But it is enormously aggravated by the over-pressure on the land. In India very many more people are engaged simply and solely in tilling the soil than are required to produce either the existing out-turn or the maximum possible out-turn. Throughout India's villages there is chronic under-employment. It tends to remain concealed, because the idleness of the peasant, working for most of the year at only half-cock on his tiny holding, is not clearly reflected in any figures or statistics. But it is a fact.

The over-pressure on the soil is not only a direct cause of low productivity per head; indirectly also it keeps production low by favouring the continuance of a primitive agricultural technique. Peasant cultivators, each with a holding of only a few acres, have neither the capital, the knowledge nor the incentive for modern scientific farming. Labour being plentiful and capital and knowledge scarce, traditional methods, however laborious, do not seem a disadvantage. Pressure on the soil combines with the inertia and fatalism of the East to perpetuate these methods. The Indian village retains its primitive character.

Of course in so large a country there is much diversity; yet almost everywhere the general pattern of rural life is the same. The cultivator is an illiterate peasant, still employing the methods and implements of Homeric times. He ploughs with a wooden plough, reaps with a hand sickle, treads out the grain with oxen and winnows it by tossing it in the air. He lives cheek by jowl with his cattle in a dark, unventilated, mud hut, set in one corner of a mud-walled yard. A collection of such dwellings, huddled closely together, with the addition of a common well, a large shady tree and an evil-smelling pond, constitute his village. He may be the actual proprietor of his holding—if he is lucky; or he may be just a tenant. In either case the cultivation is peasant cultivation. Big estates are rarely taken under the direct management of their owners and farmed on a large scale with modern machinery and paid labour. For the most part they are let out in small plots to peasant cultivators, who pay rent in kind and look to their landlord, not for help and guidance in agricultural matters, but for protection from their neighbours and the police.

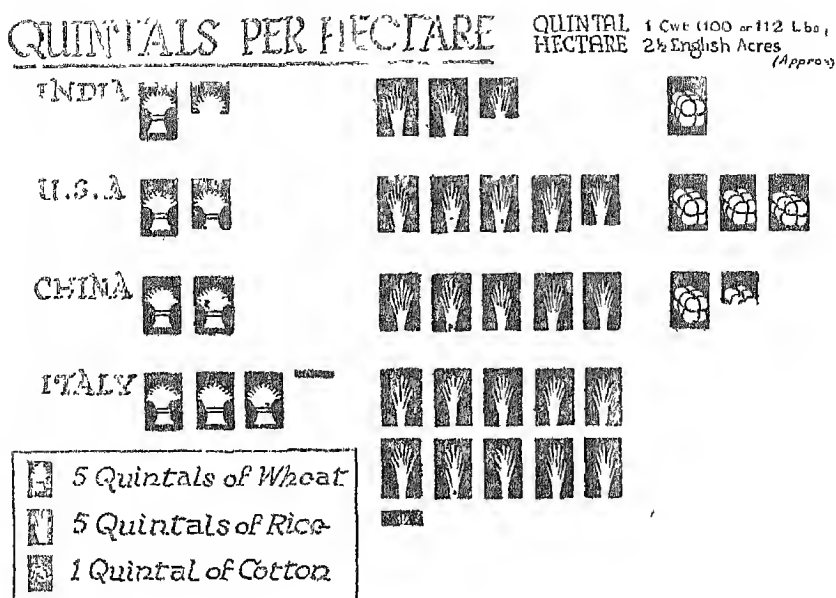
Some idea of the smallness of holdings can be obtained from the figures of a single province. In the Punjab "22.5% of the cultivators cultivate one acre or less; a further 15.4% cultivate between one and two and a half acres; 17.9% between two and a half and five acres, and 20.5% between five and ten acres. Except for Bombay, which would probably show a very similar result, all other provinces have much smaller average areas per cultivator."* The smallness of the holdings is aggravated by their fragmentation. India knows little or nothing of primogeniture. A man's estate is, on his death, divided equally among his sons and as each can claim a share of each distinct class of land (e.g. well-irrigated land or land adjacent to the village and therefore more valuable), holdings tend to become split up into innumerable small scattered fields.

From his few fragmented acres the cultivator cannot hope to gain much more than a bare livelihood for himself and his family. In certain favoured regions, no doubt, commercial crops have been introduced and are sold at a good profit. But the average cultivator grows the bulk of his crops for subsistence and tends to stick to the old staples—rice, wheat, millet and grain—which he is accustomed to consume himself. After meeting his own meagre needs he has little margin left over. A slight calamity, e.g., the death of a bullock, or a small celebration, e.g., the marriage of a daughter, will drive him to the moneylender. Indeed more often than not he is in debt. He can hardly hope to accumulate the means with which to improve his holding, nor can he lightly risk the hazard of new crops or new methods. Even if he could, physical circumstances, social custom and his own innate conservatism reinforced by religion would probably deter him. Some improvements, e.g., the sinking of a well, will only pay if his holding is compact in one area; but more probably it is scattered in small fields in several different places. He might do well to replace the growing of wheat with some more intensive form of agriculture; but he will be deterred by social custom from demeaning himself to anything so low as market-gardening or poultry-keeping, and in any case the absence of any passable road between his village and the nearest market will discourage such enterprise. During the slack season, instead of being content to sit idle with his sons, he might do well to engage in some subsidiary occupation, e.g. weaving or tanning. But there are few rural industries in which it would be proper or possible for him to take part. They are reserved for the lower castes, the menial elements in the village; they are already sufficiently crowded and are beneath the dignity of the cultivator.

Although he devotes his whole time to agriculture the yields which he obtains compare unfavourably with yields in other countries.† The figures for the year 1937 are illustrative, and are set out in the diagram on p. 14.

*Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1928.

†The figures for China are for the years 1927-31. The low yields are in some places compensated for by double cropping.



The relatively low average yields are not so much due to his own inefficiency (though his unskilful handling of his cattle and his implements would often astonish an Englishman), as to lack of manure and/or lack of moisture. Rainfall, as we have seen, is deficient in most parts of India; manure almost everywhere. Usually he cannot supply these deficiencies. Artificial irrigation and artificial manures both cost money. Even the natural manure which his cattle provide is not all available for the land; much of it his wife and daughter make into dung-cakes to serve as fuel; and as there is no alternative fuel they cannot do otherwise. With the growth of population the brushwood which could be obtained from the uncultivated "jungle" or waste land has fast disappeared.

The poor return which he gets from his land is equalled by the poor return which he gets from his cattle. The cow acquired a sanctity in India because of its value. Yet too often to-day its sole value lies in its skin and bones. Thousands of stunted, half-starved, aged or diseased beasts roam over the bare grazing grounds, unfit for work and yielding no milk. But religion forbids their destruction. Even in Muslim areas where there is no religious taboo, numbers are often very excessive. For a man's wealth is thought to lie in the multitude of his cattle. Hence unwanted animals are often kept out of pride and vainglory, rather than from any economic motive.

Cattle are of course used by the cultivator to perform the ordinary tasks of agriculture. His pair of bullocks pull the plough, thresh the grain, raise the water from the well and drag the cart to market. Sometimes they are strong and tolerably efficient. More often they are thin and undersized. Their number could certainly be greatly reduced if their breed and condition were improved. As for the cows, they are chiefly regarded as breeders of bullocks. Many of them give practically no milk at all. In the United Provinces for instance, only about 7% give as much as 6 lbs. per day compared with the 20 lbs. of a good dairy cow in England. India has a vast cattle population (estimated at nearly 214 million in 1934-35), but like the human population it is largely unproductive. Most Indians eat no beef and drink very little milk. Milk consumption is indeed in India the lowest in the world though the cattle population is the highest.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

It must not be supposed that hitherto the Government of India has simply adopted a policy of *laissez faire*. The efforts which have been made during the present century have been considerable and throw a good deal of light on the nature and intractability of the problem of Indian poverty.

Broadly speaking, the problem was—and still is—(i) to obtain more produce from the land and (ii) to draw off into other productive occupations the surplus agricultural population. As regards (i) a good deal has been accomplished by Government's initiative, as will be shown later. But in regard to (ii) it must be admitted that up to the outbreak of the present war Government had achieved little. At the beginning of the century, in spite of the vigour and enthusiasm of Lord Curzon, small encouragement was given to industrial development; rather the reverse. The Government annual report for the year 1921 is frank about it. "Some time prior to the war certain attempts to encourage Indian industry by means of pioneer factories and Government subsidies were effectively discouraged from Whitehall."* The war brought a change of policy, which was proclaimed in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report; "On all grounds a forward policy in industrial development is urgently called for." "In future," reported an Industrial Commission in 1918, "Government must play an active part in the industrial development of the country with the aim of making India more self-contained in respect of men and material." Yet the practical results of the new policy were rather meagre. Perhaps the most important achievement was the establishment of an iron and steel industry with the help of government bounties and a protective tariff. But the cost was very high. In general, the proclaimed policy of active industrial development had not by 1939

**Moral and Material Progress of India*, 1921.

produced any appreciable change in India's economy. She continued to be mainly significant as a producer of raw material. There was no perceptible shift of the population from agriculture to industry ; at most there was a small shift from "unorganised" to "organised" industry. Even so, at the outbreak of the present war the number of factory workers hardly equalled the number of beggars and only 10% of the working population was recorded as dependent on industry at the census of 1931.

The broad reason for the failure of government policy to bear more fruit was that the scale of planning and capital expenditure required to develop modern large-scale industry in a poor agricultural society was far beyond anything which Government, and perhaps public opinion also, could conceive to be either wise or practicable. In relation to what was really needed, the few projects undertaken and the small sums spent were infinitesimal. There were three main obstacles to rapid industrial development, viz. : (i) lack of skilled labour and technical experts ; (ii) lack of cheap power ; (iii) lack of capital. The first two needs could only be made good by a considerable outlay of capital which was in any case itself deficient. Industrialisation therefore involved huge initial expenditure with no immediate prospect of any return. The Government of India, still not wholly emancipated from 19th century economic doctrines, could not be expected to undertake such expenditure even if it could devise ways and means of finding the money.

In the development of agriculture, on the other hand, the Government of India during the last forty years has shown considerable initiative and achieved positive and even in some respects spectacular results. Government activity has taken three main forms :—

- (i) the extension of irrigation ;
- (ii) the promotion of more scientific agriculture ;
- (iii) the promotion of agricultural co-operation.

In each case the initial impulse can be traced to Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty at the beginning of the century.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

"Co-operation," though its potentialities are enormous, has perhaps so far produced the least tangible results. Viewed as a whole the work of forty years has been disappointing. Even to-day only about six million of India's huge population belong to co-operative societies ; and some of these obtain no real benefit, moral or material, from their membership. Most of the societies exist for the purpose of providing their members with cheap credit. Since the cultivator must borrow, this is an essential service which no other country in Asia, with the possible exception of

Japan, has developed on anything like the same scale. There are well over 100,000 credit societies. The members are saved from exorbitant interest charges, more especially the crushing burden of compound interest, and in large areas money-lenders have been compelled to reduce their rates. Too often, however, the co-operative society has been a source of credit additional rather than alternative to the moneylender, and the last state of the members has been worse than the first. Many societies have had to be liquidated owing to failure of members to repay loans. It has been found that what is wanted by the cultivator is not so much cheap credit as "lessons in the wise use of it" and above all to learn to save instead of borrowing. Such lessons "co-operation" can itself help to provide by instilling a new spirit of joint responsibility and thrift, but the process is a slow one.

Moreover, loans are mainly taken for the ordinary purposes of cultivation (e.g., purchase of seed or fodder in periods of stress), or for repayment of old debts, litigation, ceremonial expenses and the purchase of land. Rarely are they applied to effecting some capital improvement in the cultivator's existing holding which will permanently enhance his productive capacity. Credit societies, therefore, while they may lighten the cultivator's burden of debt and have a useful educative influence, usually stop short at that.

Attempts to start co-operative societies for other more definitely productive purposes, e.g., the purchase of modern implements or the improvement of cattle, have not made much progress except in the Punjab where societies formed for the consolidation* of holdings had by 1938-39 consolidated more than 1,000,000 acres. This has been done with the unanimous consent of all concerned and it shows what can be achieved through co-operation where the gain is obvious. In this case the gain is so obvious—good judges put it at an increase in income of 15% to 25%—that recently it has been found difficult to keep pace with the demand for consolidation. But, apart from this—and it is only in the Punjab and the Central Provinces that consolidation has attained any importance—the direct contribution of "co-operation" towards increasing agricultural productivity has scarcely been appreciable. Its indirect effect, in rousing the cultivator from his helpless fatalism and making him responsive to new methods and ideas, though not precisely measurable, have been important; but even these have been less than they should have been owing to the unwillingness of India's political leaders to lend enthusiastic support to a Government-sponsored movement. This is the more to be regretted, for as the Royal Commission on Agriculture wrote 16 years ago, "if co-operation fails, there will fail the best hope of rural India."

*This means arranging exchanges of land between the various owners, so that their holdings instead of being scattered all over the village in small yields are "consolidated" in one or two places.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

Systematic agricultural research and experimentation in India owes its origin to Lord Curzon, who established the Imperial Institute of Agriculture at Pusa in 1904. Since then numerous experimental and demonstration farms have been started in every province and a large staff of peripatetic officials instruct the cultivator in the new methods of cultivation, improved varieties of crops, and improved implements which have been tested and found successful at the farms. Within the limits imposed by purely peasant cultivation much has been accomplished. Greatly improved varieties of wheat, cotton and sugarcane, and to a less extent of rice and millet, have been evolved and widely popularised. In this way many lakhs of rupees (estimated in 1929 as 8.7 million pounds per annum), have been put into the pocket of the cultivator. But progress, though striking in some localities and in respect of certain crops, e.g., cotton, appears less significant if India is considered as a whole. By 1938-39 the area under improved varieties (excluding cotton) had only reached about 10% of the total cropped area, and attempts to introduce new methods of cultivation and new implements, though by no means a complete failure, have been less successful.

IRRIGATION

It is in the extension of irrigation that Government's achievements have been really spectacular. Far too little is known of them outside India. Over a century ago British engineers began to put in order some of the derelict indigenous irrigation works (dams, storage tanks and canals), which had long fallen into disrepair. They then turned their attention to new projects and throughout the second half of the nineteenth century new construction went steadily forward with gratifying results. A further impetus was given to the work by Lord Curzon and within the last fifty years numerous irrigation schemes, some of them of a magnitude unequalled anywhere in the world, have been successfully completed. In Madras the Mettur Dam (the second largest dam in the world) provides irrigation for a new area of over 300,000 acres and supplements the irrigation of 1,000,000 more. Two of the latest canal systems—the Sukkur Barrage canals in Sind and the Sutlej Valley canals in the Punjab, Bikanir and Bahawalpur—each command an area equal to the whole cultivated area of Egypt. The Sukkur canals irrigate over 5,000,000 acres, of which 3,000,000 were previously waterless desert. Irrigation from the Sutlej Valley canals is on a similar scale. Huge tracts of country which 20 to 30 years ago were sandy wastes, sparsely dotted with scrub thorn bushes and traversed only occasionally by a few nomadic camel-breeders, have been converted into some of the most flourishing districts in Asia—sturdy colonists, carefully selected and grouped and set down

with 25 acres of virgin land apiece in well-laid-out villages, pride themselves on the new world which their exertions have helped bring into being. In these colony districts the advice of the Agricultural Department is always in keen demand. The fields are sown with wheat, cotton and sugar-cane of the latest improved varieties; there are orchards of oranges and grape-fruit; the bullocks are of good breed, strong and well cared for. In place of the dark huddled mud hovels and narrow, crooked, stinking alleys of the old villages there are spacious courtyards, sometimes adorned with flowers and shrubs, clean bright well-ventilated houses, and wide straight lanes with shady trees, converging on a central square. Metalled roads lead to flourishing market towns, specially planned to receive the vast surplus produce of these newly developed areas and equipped with cotton ginning factories and with flour and oil mills.

In these favoured regions a new day has dawned. The life led is simple but it is a life of more than bare subsistence. The peasant eats fruit and buys a gramophone. He has conceived new wants, new ambitions and has a new standard of life. The changes are great and significant, the increase in productivity substantial. But they are dwarfed by India's immensity. A flourishing England does not mitigate the poverty of Poland. Danish eggs and bacon do not help the peasant of South Italy. So, too, the prosperous canal colonies of North-Western India do not raise the level of life in Bengal or the Deccan. Extensive though they are, they are but a tiny fraction of the whole of India. Even the total irrigated area in British India is only about 60 million acres out of a sown area of about 220 million, and of this only a small proportion is new "colony" land. Most of it is land previously cultivated and already overcrowded to which canal irrigation has been added, or land which has long been irrigated by privately owned wells or tanks. Furthermore, even in the newly developed areas there is a danger that all the advantages gained will be lost in two or three generations through an increase in the population. Already in the older colonies the holdings are becoming subdivided and the population is beginning to press upon the means of subsistence.

MORE DRASTIC MEASURES NEEDED

With relatively small exceptions, therefore, all the remarkable achievements of British engineers have sufficed only to increase the quantity and not to change appreciably the quality of human life. Throughout most of India the peasant remains obstinately in the old economic ruts. Government's efforts have not been on a scale sufficient to jolt him suddenly on to a new level of existence which would carry with it the desire to restrict his numbers. Here again, as in the case of industrial development, the scale of human effort and capital expenditure required in order materially to effect the lives of India's millions, was something quite beyond the imagination and capacity of the Government of India. The rate at which

they were able to expand agricultural production was fast, and fast enough just to outstrip procreation; but to make a real impression on Indian poverty a much faster rate was required and to achieve a faster rate there was need of;

1. More capital;
2. A greater supply of trained personnel;
3. The active co-operation of the people;

None of these was readily forthcoming.

The only country which has attempted the sort of rapid social and economic revolution which seems to be needed in India, is Russia; and Russia possesses greater natural resources than India and started her grand experiment with far less heavy pressure of population on the existing means of subsistence. The task in India is much more formidable. A foreign bureaucracy alone could not bring about the required transformation. For far-reaching social and economic changes cannot be effected by Government decree. No fiat of the Viceroy can industrialise India or revolutionise her agriculture. There must be in the people themselves some willingness to follow a lead. Compulsion must be reinforced by co-operation. The Russian Government was ruthless in its methods but it could count on the zealous collaboration of a large body of ardent supporters.

In India enthusiastic co-operation between Government and the governed is lacking. Indeed, too often it is only "non-co-operation" that arouses enthusiasm. A sort of crusading spirit is needed if the inert mass of peasant cultivators are to be persuaded to change their traditional habits and outlook and modify social and religious customs in the interests of economic progress. But a government ultimately controlled by foreigners cannot easily awaken this crusading spirit except against itself. Hence all the energy and enthusiasm of the ardent elements in India which should have been devoted to social and economic reform have spent themselves in political conflict with Government.

It is idle to blame the intelligentsia of India for their lack of interest in social work and their concentration on politics. In the circumstances nothing else could have been expected. As Bernard Shaw has remarked, "A conquered nation is like a man with cancer: he can think of nothing else . . . [a conquered nation] will listen to no reformer, to no philosopher, to no preacher, until the demand of the Nationalist is granted. It will attend to no business, however vital, except the business of liberation and unification."

This "cancer" is a fatal obstacle to all planning for raising the standard of living. Until it has been successfully cured it will deflect attention from every other aim. The first essential therefore is to solve the political problem. A continuation of British Control, though it might preserve order, is

incompatible with progress. British rule is now essentially sterile. It contains no possibilities of development for it cannot evoke and utilise the creative impulses of the people. These are lost in self-pity and fruitless opposition to the British. Though, therefore, in India the economic problem is basic—it is this which touches the lives of the illiterate masses—before it can be effectively tackled the political objectives of “liberation” and “unification” must be secured. We must therefore devote some pages to politics.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF FOUR HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE

2. POLITICAL

The meaning of "liberation" in an Indian context is sufficiently clear; and so far as Britain is concerned India's liberation is no longer to be postponed to an indefinite future. "Immediately on the cessation of hostilities," so ran the draft Declaration which Sir Stafford Cripps carried to India in March, 1942—steps are to be taken to set up in India, an elected body (the proposed composition of which was stated) charged with the task of framing a Constitution for a fully self-governing Indian Union. As for Britain's obligations and interests in India, these are to be settled by a treaty freely negotiated between the British Government and the Constitution-making body. The purport of these proposals was described by Sir Stafford Cripps himself as "complete and absolute self-determination and self-government for India." And Mr. Rajaghopalachari, the former Congress Premier of Madras, has written of them: "It may be possible to improve the language and minor particulars . . . But the British Government could not offer a scheme going further than that embodied in those proposals on the point of national independence." Though the Cripps' offer was not accepted, Britain is pledged by it. The meaning of this has been made clear by Lord Wavell. "The Cripps offer was not made in a panic," he said, addressing the combined legislatures at Delhi. "It stands forth to-day as a solemn pledge of the Government that India should have full control of her own destiny among the nations of the Commonwealth and the world." Britain must honour that pledge.

THE DIVISIONS OF INDIA

"Unification" in an Indian context must be understood very loosely as meaning the healing of divisions. Inasmuch as India's divisions are the main obstacle to her liberation, "unification" in this sense is a primary political objective—even though the healing of divisions may in fact only be obtainable at the unhappy sacrifice of political unity.

India's divisions are many and deep. There are caste divisions (e.g., between Brahman and non-Brahman), economic divisions (e.g., between landlord and tenant), linguistic, racial and regional divisions (e.g., between Bengali and Madras) and political divisions (e.g. between British Provinces and Native States). But all pale into insignificance beside the great division between Hindus and Muslims. It is the conflict between these two communities which is the real barrier to liberation, and the real threat to India's future peace. It has provided the one really cogent argument whereby in recent years Britain could justify to herself and to the world her continued rule in India.

It is important that the nature of this conflict should be properly understood. In essence it is a struggle for political power between two communities, distinguished by religion and culture, yet closely intermingled. The 94 million Muslims, though mainly concentrated in the north-west and north-east of India, are to be found unevenly distributed throughout the whole country. In hundreds of towns and villages they and the Hindus have for generations lived together in peace. In some they are perpetually at loggerheads. To a surprising degree they are at once intermingled and yet separate and distinct. Differences of religion, custom, culture and dress and the absence of marriage ties keep them apart. On the other hand they live and work side by side, those belonging to the same area speak the same language and share a common provincial patriotism, and they are hardly at all distinguished by race; for the number of Muslim invaders who settled permanently in India was comparatively very small. The great majority of present-day Muslims are descendants of Hindu converts. In the north-west of India, where Muslim influence was strongest, the peasantry (which happened to be of particularly vigorous stock) embraced Islam *en masse*. Elsewhere converts were mainly drawn from lower caste Hindus. This largely explains why the Muslim community as a whole is comparatively poor and backward. The effects of a humble origin persist. They persist and often give an economic character to the conflict. Economically as well as numerically the Muslims are the weaker community.

There persists however among many of them a tradition of political supremacy. Though most of the old ruling families have decayed or died out, upper class Muslims cannot forget that before the British came a small Muslim ruling class dominated most of India; and the tradition is still preserved as a living reality in the great Native State of Hyderabad where a Muslim ruler and ruling class govern a mainly Hindu population.

The feeling between the two communities has grown very much stronger during the last 40 years. This is mainly attributable to political developments. In earlier days, when Britain's rule by right of conquest was still new and unquestioned, both communities accepted their position of equal subordination to a third party. There was no temptation to fight

with one another, as there was nothing to fight for. (So too to-day in Native States, where political power and all that goes with it is in the hands of hereditary rulers, both communities tend to accept this hereditary rule as permanent and legitimate, and remain at peace with one another). But once it became clear that Britain's rule by right of conquest was neither permanent nor unchallengeable, a dangerous rivalry between the two communities began to grow. There was now a prize worth fighting for, namely, the political power and patronage which Britain would one day surrender.

This spirit of rivalry showed itself most strongly among the Muslims. The Hindus, aware of their superior numbers and business skill and comfortably assured that modern political theory attributed a divine right to a majority, felt that their primary concern was to wrest political power from the British rather than to quarrel with the Muslims over its division. To the Muslims on the other hand, with their tradition of political supremacy but consciousness of economic inferiority, the prospect of a Hindu monopoly of political power appeared alarming and intolerable. This partly explains why in the struggle between the two communities the Muslims have tended to seem the more aggressive.

THE MUSLIM MINORITY

For many years Muslims sought to safeguard their position as a minority by securing political concessions. Those which were finally embodied in the Government of India Act, 1935, appeared at the time to satisfy them. The concession of separate electorates, granted a generation earlier, was continued. Sind was separated from Bombay so as to create another Muslim Province. In Provinces where Muslims were in a minority they were given "weightage," i.e., more seats in the legislature than would be admissible on a population basis, and in addition certain "safeguards" were provided for minorities. At the Centre (where there was to be a Federal Government) they were allotted one third of the seats, whereas on a population basis they were only entitled to about one quarter, and the large number of seats reserved for representatives of the Native States seemed to afford them additional protection against Congress (i.e., Hindu) domination. Indeed, when the Act was framed, the main complaint of the Muslim leader, Mr. Jinnah, was not that it gave the Muslims inadequate protection against the Hindus, but that it left too much control in the hands of the British. When on April 1st, 1937, it came into force, no one foresaw that within less than three years the whole Act and the very principles on which it was based would be denounced by Muslims on the ground that it subjected them to the tyranny of a Hindu majority.

Yet this is what happened. Within an astonishingly short space of time

political concessions had ceased to satisfy the Muslims and they were demanding a separate National State of their own. In 1938 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was still saying, "In India to-day no one thinks in terms other than those of national unity . . . It is difficult to conceive of any separatist tendency which can break up this unity." By 1940 a plan for the partition of India, which seven years earlier Muslim representatives at the Round Table Conference had themselves described as a "students' scheme, chimerical and impracticable," had been adopted as the official programme of the Muslim League.

The sudden change in the nature of the Muslims' political demands is the most startling of recent political developments in India. It was caused, at least in part, by the ill-judged tactics of the Congress Party. At the first elections under the new Act of 1935, Congress obtained large majorities in all the predominantly Hindu Provinces and proceeded to form governments. But they refused to include in their Ministries as representatives of the Muslim community any Muslim who was not himself either a Congressman or closely identified with Congress. Members of the Muslim League—the party which pre-eminently represented Muslim sectarian interests—were rigidly excluded. Mr. Jinnah's reaction was quick. Already in 1937 he was complaining that "Muslims can expect neither justice nor fair play under Congress government." Very soon the idea spread among Muslims, that when a Federal Government came to be formed for the whole of India, they would find there exactly the same uncompromising Congress (i.e., Hindu) domination as in the Congress Provinces. A general feeling of uneasiness began to grow and a tendency to rally to the League. Other Muslim parties which had been favourable to Congress and at one time influential faded away. The League became in effect the only Muslim party. By 1939 Mr. Jinnah, its leader, was boldly challenging all the political assumptions of the past 20 years and asserting that a democratic system of parliamentary government was "an impossibility" in India. In September of that year the Working Committee of the Muslim League declared that Muslim India was "irrevocably opposed to any 'federal objective' which must necessarily result in a majority-community rule under the guise of a democracy and a parliamentary system of government. Such a constitution is totally unsuited to the genius of the peoples of this country which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national state." The ground was now prepared for the "two nation" theory. Hindus and Muslims, Muslim spokesmen now began to explain, are not just two distinct religious communities, but two separate nations. Each therefore, like other nations, must have its own separate National State. In pursuance of these ideas the Muslim League at a meeting in Lahore, in March, 1940, definitely committed itself to a demand for the Partition of India.

THE IDEA OF "PAKISTAN"

Partition is now to all outward appearance the real issue between the two communities. The old days of haggling over weightage, seats and safeguards have gone. The Muslims demand a "sovereign independent" state of their own in India. But the Hindus regard "Mother India" as one and indivisible. Partition appears to them almost a sacrilege—the carving up of a living creature. Agreement between the two communities over this issue is to all outward appearance impossible. Nor even if agreement could be reached, does partition provide a simple and ideal solution of the communal problem. However the boundaries were drawn there would be minorities left in each of the National States far too large and scattered to be disposed of by any exchange of population. There are also considerable difficulties of detail. The Muslims predominate in two areas in India, viz.: the north-west and the north-east. Mr. Jinnah demands that both should be separated from the rest of India. One, popularly known as "Pakistan," comprises the Punjab, Sind, North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir and Baluchistan; the other, Assam and most of Bengal. But these two areas are separated from one another by nearly 1,000 miles and their inhabitants are markedly different in language, race and culture; indeed the Bengali Muslim has little in common with the Muslim of the Punjab except religion. Are they then to form a single State (the difficulties of which are obvious) or are there to be two separate Muslim National States?

The capital of the north-east area would necessarily be Calcutta. But Calcutta is a predominantly Hindu city. A Muslim State with a Hindu capital does not seem likely to be a happy arrangement. In North-West India or "Pakistan" the five million Sikhs,* a compact militant community concentrated in central and eastern Punjab, would hardly be a harmonious element in a Muslim State. For the Sikhs were the rulers of the Punjab immediately before British annexation. Muslim domination is no more acceptable to them than Hindu domination is to Muslims.

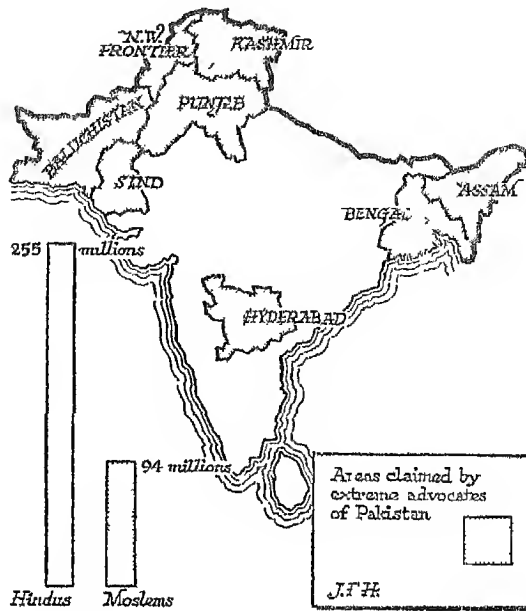
It is also undeniable that "Pakistan," if separated from the rest of India, would suffer economically. It has practically no coal and iron of its own and little proved mineral wealth of any kind. Sind, Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province are all "deficit" areas which have hitherto received special financial assistance from the Central Government. Men drawn from "Pakistan" have for nearly a century formed a considerable proportion of the Indian Army and thus have been largely supported by the rest of India. With separation, these economic advantages, direct and indirect, would all be lost. Many Muslim leaders in the "Pakistan" area are on this very account lukewarm about partition.

*The Sikhs were in origin a reformist sect of Hindus. They were turned into a self-conscious militant Community by Muslim oppression.

Nevertheless it remains the official policy of the Muslim League of which most of them are members; and when the Hindus point out the loss and probably retardation of development which would result from separation, Muslims reply that they "are content to develop in their own way without molesting their neighbours or indenting on them for charity. If it is their

funeral let it be their funeral." And to this there is perhaps no answer. The truth is that for the Muslim bourgeoisie the idea of a State, however poor, in which they and not the Hindus would be the rich men and hold all the best posts in Government service, industry and commerce, has a very powerful attraction.

This being the position of the conflict between the two communities there is a tendency to accept the view that no peaceful settlement is possible. In actual fact the issue is still open to the influence of human volition and perseverance. To assert that Hindus and Muslims will never reach agreement is as erroneous as to assert that they will. At present few even of the leaders have really decided in their own minds what they must in all circumstances obtain and what they can in no circumstances surrender. Desires and opinions can still in some degree be moulded and modified. But though opinion is still to some extent unformed, it would be a mistake to assume that the Muslim demand for partition is not seriously meant. Because it is of such recent origin and because it seems in some ways so detrimental to Muslim interests and so beset with practical difficulties, many people believe that the Muslims only put it forward to strengthen their bargaining position. This may be so. It may be, too, that when all the implications of partition are more fully unfolded, Muslims will feel less enthusiasm for it. But for the present it is best to assume that they mean what they say.



THE CRIPPS PROPOSALS

The British Government wisely acted on this assumption when making the Cripps offer. This represented a really statesmanlike attempt not only, as we have seen, to meet India's desire for "liberation" but also at the same time to remove the main obstacle thereto by resolving the communal conflict. In regard to the communal issue the British Government, taking the Muslims at their word, based their proposals on the acceptance of the principle of partition, in the event of this being found to be really desired. While the object of the proposals was indicated to be the creation of a single Indian Union, which would form a single Dominion under the Crown (with complete freedom to secede if it so wished), the right was recognised "of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution, to retain its present constitutional position," provision being made for its subsequent accession to the Union if it afterwards so decided, or for its forming along with other provinces a separate Union of its own.

As was to be expected this acceptance of the principle of partition was not welcomed by the Hindus. The Congress Working Committee considered "the novel principle of non-accession a severe blow to the conception of India unity." Though they did not think "in terms of compelling the people of any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will," compulsion should not be used against "other substantial groups within that area." In other words the great Provinces of Bengal and the Punjab, which have bare Muslim majorities, should not be allowed to stand out of the Union against the wishes of their large non-Muslim minorities.

The Hindu Mahasabha was more emphatic and declared that it "could not be true to itself and to the best interests of Hindustan (India) if it is a party to any proposal which involves the political partition of India in any shape or form."

On the other hand the Muslim League expressed itself dissatisfied because the partition of India had not been made a primary aim. "The establishment of a single Indian Union appeared to be a main object of His Majesty's Government, the creation of more than one union being relegated only to the realm of remote possibility."

Yet on the whole the outcry against this part of the Cripps proposals was less vehement than might have been expected; and there is at least one prominent Hindu and Congress leader, Mr. Rajagopalachari, who has boldly urged that the non-accession principle should be accepted as being now the only practicable course. For if, to take a possible example, it turns out that the solid block of Muslims inhabiting Baluchistan, Kashmir, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Western Punjab are bent on separating from the rest of India, there is no organised force available

which could prevent them doing so except that of the British Government ; and in a free India that force could not be applied. As Mr. Rajagopalachari has written, "Independence must be built up of consenting units, if it is to rest not on any outside force but on abiding cohesive strength."

Some of the detailed practical difficulties in the way of partition have already been mentioned. The objections to it on general grounds are only too obvious. To divide up political and economic units is to run exactly counter to the needs of the modern world. But whatever the objections and practical difficulties the principle of partition must be conceded. The door must be left open for Provinces to enter or to quit the proposed Indian Union. On no other basis will the two parties be able to begin discussion of their difference, let alone reach agreement. Britain can best serve India's political interests by standing firm on the Cripps offer not only in regard to Indian independence but also in its approach to the communal conflict.

THE POSSIBILITY OF A SOLUTION

It is not possible to produce agreement. This must spring from Indians themselves, and will not even begin to appear so long as we seem likely to remain in India as a dominating third party. But the chances of agreement are higher than most Englishmen imagine. Those who argue from the apparent intransigence of the present Indian leaders that agreement will never be reached betray their inexperience of Indian character. They also under-estimate the effect which would be produced by the certain knowledge of our intended abdication. The inducement to compromise would be very strong.

Though it is not possible to prophesy that agreement will in fact be reached, it is possible to forecast in a very general way the sort of forms which agreement might take. There are two main possibilities. On the one hand it is not inconceivable that if the door of the stable is left wide open the Muslims will feel insufficient temptation to walk out and will prefer to remain inside and extract large concessions from their stable companions, the Hindus. These might take the form of agreements for sharing political power both in the Federal and the Provincial Governments, for guaranteeing the Muslims adequate (and perhaps more than adequate) representation in the Government services and in the armed forces, and for providing special assistance for the industrial development of predominantly Muslim areas. In any case the functions of the Federal Government would have to be reduced to a minimum so that in Provinces where Muslims are in a majority they might enjoy a feeling of substantial independence.

If, on the other hand, the Muslims insist on partition, then the major

difficulties might be overcome by a compromise on the following lines. We have already seen that the Sikh community in the Punjab is the principal obstacle to the creation of a Muslim State in North-West India (Pakistan). At the time of the Cripps Mission their leaders were very blunt in their opposition to Partition. "We shall resist," they said, "by all possible means separation of the Punjab from an all-Indian Union." Yet if Pakistan is to be created, it seems absolutely necessary to include the Sikhs in it. To exclude them would mean drawing the boundary between Pakistan and the rest of India somewhere in the middle of the Punjab; and this seems impossible. Geographically, economically, racially and linguistically the central Punjab is one. Any boundary bisecting it in the middle would be wholly artificial; it would sunder a long and closely integrated society and cut across road, railway and canal systems in an awkward, if not impossible manner. It might possibly serve as a dividing line between the units of a single Federated State, but not as the frontier between two independent National States.

The Muslim plan is to include the Sikhs in Pakistan. They argue, with some cogency, that as members of a Pakistan "supported by the combined might of Muslims and Sikhs" they will count for far more than as an insignificant minority in a United India of 400 millions. The Sikhs might be induced to agree to such inclusion and severance from the rest of India if certain concessions were made to them. These concessions would probably be (a) the creation of a new and predominantly non-Muslim Province of Eastern Punjab which the Sikhs could regard as "their" Province. (b) the grant to the Sikhs of rights and privileges in the management of the affairs of Pakistan out of proportion to their numbers.

The State of Pakistan, centred round the great Indus, would be quite a natural geographical and economic unit. It would have a port in Karachi; and, though mainly agricultural and deficient in mineral resources, it would have in the waters of the Indus and its tributaries a potential source of electric power. There is also oil in the barren hills of the north-west which may grow in industrial importance. With Sikh co-operation Pakistan would not be chimerical and impracticable.*

If a compromise were reached regarding a Muslim State of Pakistan based on the concessions to the Sikh minority suggested above, then a not dissimilar compromise might be reached regarding the rest of India or Hindustan, based on analogous concessions to the Muslim minority, in such a way as to obviate the need for any further partition. For it is possible that if the Muslims were assured some measure of political predominance in Bengal and Assam and also rights and privileges out of proportion to their numbers in the general management of the affairs of Hindustan they would prefer this to the project of a separate Muslim

*At Attock.

State in North-East India. If not, the second Muslim State, though awkward and likely to be torn with faction would come into being. Bengal was for practical purpose an independent kingdom in the 18th century ; and would be so again.

As regards the relations between the two or more Indian Unions which would come into existence in the event of partition Mr. Rajagopalachari, echoing sentiments expressed by Mr. Jinnah, has written, "Let it be remembered that separation does not debar negotiation of terms for mutual assistance against foreign aggression and for other necessary matters, or the arrangement on a reciprocal basis of legitimate safeguards for religious minorities."

"I can see no limits," says a Muslim political writer, "to the terms of friendliness and happy association that can subsist among the different States in the India of the future."

On the other hand it may be argued that the considerable minorities which, however boundaries were drawn, would exist both in Hindustan and Pakistan would be a continual source of friction between the two States, leading ultimately to war. Some Hindus believe that war is deliberately intended and see in the demand for Pakistan a sinister design to build up an enormous Muslim State which would overshadow and eventually dominate the rest of India. They quote the unguarded utterance of a member of the working Committee of the Muslim League : "We are not going to be contented with Pakistan. It is only a jumping-off ground for a wider dominion among the Muslim countries of Asia."

These fears and ambitions must at present be considered fanciful. The development of relations between Hindustan and Pakistan would depend on many as yet incalculable factors, among them the degree of consent which was secured in the first instance for the partition of India. The creation of separate Hindu and Muslim States would not necessarily embitter the Hindu-Muslim quarrel nor would it necessarily end it.

THE NATIVE PRINCES

So much for the most dangerous of India's divisions. Compared with it other divisions are trifling. They constitute at present no real threat to India's ordered life and no serious impediment to her liberation ; most of them are just reproductions in an Indian form of divisions with which we are familiar in many other countries of the world. One of them, however, is peculiar to India ; and though in itself unlikely to arouse dangerous passions and, whatever some Indian nationalists may think, no real bar to Indian freedom, it does present unusual political problems and in any discussion of India's future requires more than a passing mention. This is the division between the Provinces of British India and the Indian States.

The main facts about the Indian States are well known. Numbering in all about 560, they occupy nearly one-half of the total area of India and contain nearly one quarter of the population. They present a bewildering variety. In size they range from great territories like Hyderabad, about equal in area to Italy and with a population of 16 million, to petty fiefs of a few square miles and a few thousand inhabitants. Some of them are compact blocks of territory ; some of them are badly broken up and confusedly intermingled with British India. In a few there is an efficient modern system of administration, in others varying forms of antiquated incompetence. The smaller States have been aptly described* as "museum pieces, their political institutions being those of Mogul times." Yet one of the smallest, Aundh, has experimented with the purest forms of democracy.

Their past histories are also various. Some, e.g. the Rajput States of Rajputana and Central India, are of great and illustrious antiquity. They managed to preserve their identity through many centuries of Muslim domination. Most of the others, including the largest and most famous, came into being in the 18th century during the confusion which attended the decay of the Mogul Empire. Diverse adventurers—Muslim Governors who were nominally the servants of the Empire—Maratha and Sikh leaders who were its open foes, free-booters and professional soldiers from both within and without India's borders—joined in a general scramble and carved out for themselves, as best they might, independent kingdoms of their own. Thus it comes about that there are both Hindu, Sikh and Muslim rulers, and that their subjects are in some cases mainly of their own faith, in others mainly of the opposite, and in others very mixed.

How is it that this strange medley of States has survived down to the present day ? They have survived by the grace of the British, who at first tolerated their existence and later deliberately preserved them. Just before the Mutiny it looked as though all or nearly all of them would be swept away. In quick succession Sind, the Punjab, Oudh, the Central Provinces and several smaller areas were on one pretext or another annexed and brought under direct administration. There seemed no reason why the process should stop. Compared with the British the native administrations were corrupt and inefficient. It appeared to be almost a duty to end them. There were, however, a number of Englishmen who held that the people preferred the misrule of their own Chiefs to "our strict and meddling system" and that it was wiser and safer to tolerate native administrations, however bad, than to bring more and more territory under our direct rule. Though only a small minority, they strongly opposed the vigorous policy of annexation and prophesied that disaster would come of it. The fulfilment of these prophecies by the Mutiny made a profound impression. Annexations were felt to be

*By Guy Wint in *India and Democracy*.

dangerous. It was resolved that there should be no more of them. "We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Native Princes as our own," ran the Queen's Proclamation of 1858. The States as they happened to exist in that year were henceforth carefully maintained in being. The work of tidying up "the motley disarray" of India was abruptly cut short, leaving the illogical miscellany of a few large and many petty States which to-day confuses the map and embarrasses the administration.

Thus India has remained divided into two unequal and dissimilar segments held together only by British political supremacy of which the Viceroy, at once the Governor-General of British India and the Representative of the Crown, to which all the Princes owe allegiance, is the living symbol. The division, though originally irrational and artificial, has gone deep. In the States, with few exceptions, autocratic rule and with it the social and political ideas of ancient India have been preserved. In British India there has been an advance to Parliamentary Democracy and encouragement of "westernisation." The States are renowned for their "loyalty" to the British Crown and for the "generosity" of their Rulers in time of war. "Their affection and loyalty are important assets for Britain." British India on the other hand has in recent years mainly attracted attention by its manifestations of anti-British feeling.

WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM?

How are these disparate elements to be welded together into a free India, released from British control? And how is British control to be withdrawn consistently with the obligation, embodied in Treaties, "to maintain unimpaired the privileges, rights and dignities of the Prince"? These are problems presented by the division between British India and the States.

In regard to the first and more general problem various answers have been given. An attempt at a practical answer was provided by the Government of India Act, 1935, which contemplated an Indian Federation made up both of democratic Provinces and autocratic States. It was hoped that these dissimilar units would be able to work together in loose harness and would perhaps gradually become assimilated to each other. But, owing partly to the outbreak of war, it has not been possible to bring this scheme into operation. The question therefore still remains open.

Some of those who regard the States as mere relics of feudal oppression favour a straight and simple solution. The States must be swept away. "Nothing could be surer than that the problem will be, and must be, solved by the eventual abolition of the Princes," writes Mr. Lionel Fielden.* A similar view is expressed by Mr. Palme Dutt.† "The

* *In Beggar My Neighbour*, p. 35.

† *In India To-day*, p. 402.

Indian States can have no place in a free India. The bisection of India into British India and the India of the Princes corresponds to no natural line of division, to no historic necessity and to no need or sentiment of the people, but is an administrative manoeuvre of imperialism to hold the people divided."

Less drastic remedies appear to be contemplated by the Indian National Congress. The States are not to be completely abolished but transformed. "The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the States as in the rest of India . . . The only kind of federation that can be acceptable to Congress is one in which the States participate as free units enjoying the same measure of democracy and freedom as in the rest of India. The Congress therefore . . . deplores the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and the suppression of civil liberties in many of the States."*

There are others, however, who feel that the Indian States are not wholly to be condemned but have preserved a valuable and truly Indian tradition. A former English official† in India has written of them: "In many States are to be found rulers who give themselves almost entirely to the welfare of their subjects; and also devoted loyalty to the ruler . . . It is true to say that the States enshrine much of the best of India's past glories. They are splendid schools for political training, and they have produced statesmen of the first rank, in India to-day, among their Chiefs and Ministers. There is every hope that they will play a great part commensurate with their traditions and resources in the India of the future."

Those who believe that this more flattering picture of the States is not wholly untrue and are aware of the strength of the tradition of personal rule in India, necessarily doubt whether the States can best play their great part by changing themselves abruptly into Western democracies.

BRITAIN'S OBLIGATION TO THE PRINCES

So much for opinions on the general problem. As regards the more specific problem of Britain's obligations to the Princes, not much has yet been said. Involving as it does solemn Treaty engagements the subject is a delicate one. It is however pretty clear that Britain cannot allow British India a complete and absolute self-determination and self-government," and at the same time continue to stand as guarantor of hundreds of petty States. Her relations with the States have arisen out of her position of supremacy in the rest of India. The latter cannot change without the former changing also. To try to stand fast on the letter of the treaties is now in nobody's interest; and for the States it may even mean disaster. For the real secret of such hostility to the States as exists within India is

*Resolution passed at the Congress Session at Haripura, 1938.

†Sir William Barton.

not that they are oppressive and obsolete autocracies, but that they are bulwarks of a foreign power and obstacles to India's freedom. The more therefore they cling to Britain and the letter of their treaties, the more they will arouse feeling against themselves and jeopardise their future position. If on the other hand they show themselves ready to dispense with alien protection and try to stand on their own feet there will be less disposition to agitate for their extinction. Even the petty princelets, who, without protection, can in no circumstances hope to survive for long with their present powers, might look forward to an honourable euthanasia.

All this is well understood by some of the Princes. And the British Government has already recognised in general terms that Britain's obligations to the Princes will have to be revised. In one of the clauses of the Cripps' proposals it is stated: "Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution (i.e., the Constitution of the projected Indian Union to be formed by an elected body after the war)—it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation."

What form the revision will take is not, of course, indicated. But in the nature of things it would have to be fairly drastic. With a few of the larger States or groups of States which are comparable to European "countries," it is possible that a Britain which had withdrawn from political control of British India, might continue to maintain treaty relations. But she would cease to have the will or the power to extend further tutelage to *all* the relics of a bygone age which hitherto she has artificially preserved. The Princes, especially the lesser Princes, have derived great advantages from their association with Britain. Many of them were in the 18th century saved by the British from complete extinction at the hands of more powerful rivals; they have enjoyed since then nearly a century and a half of sheltered existence. This cannot go on for ever. In a changing world Britain can best discharge such moral obligation as she still has towards them not by encouraging the belief that by some device the old order can continue, but by persuading them to acquiesce in and adapt themselves to a considerable change of status and function.

To put the matter bluntly, many of the small and medium-sized States have as such no future before them. This is the element of truth in the opinion that the States must be swept away. For nearly a century and a half these petty States have existed on sufferance. Henceforward who will be interested in suffering (and protecting) them? Leaving aside the changes which might arise from palace or popular revolution, they will be at the mercy of their larger neighbours, whether these be Provinces or other States. These neighbours will not necessarily, like the British, see any political advantage in tolerating their separate existence. Petty states, composed of fragmented territory, give rise to all sorts of disputes and administrative inconveniences. The temptation to have done with

them will in many cases be irresistible. Amalgamation with one another or absorption by larger units is for scores of them inevitable. Their Rulers will do well to come to terms in good time with the logic of history. If they do so, they will still be able, if they wish, to play an honourable part in public affairs. Even the least powerful of them can, as a pensioned and titled nobility, continue to be influential members of a recognised and respected ruling class—a class which India badly needs.

On the other hand the larger States, though they too under British rule have only existed on sufferance, are quite strong enough to stand by themselves. A great State like Hyderabad or a compact group of ancient historic States, like those in Rajputana, cannot be coerced or dragooned or swallowed up by a neighbour. They are too strong. Nor will they be lightly overturned by internal revolution. They are too firmly rooted in the past. Moreover once they have ceased to seem an obstacle to India's freedom there will be no pressing incentive to attack them; and, if a Hindu-Muslim agreement is reached, there may be a powerful deterrent, viz.: the fear of stirring up Hindu-Muslim passions. For it so happens that in the two largest States the Ruler is of the opposite faith to the majority of his subjects. In Hyderabad a Muslim rules Hindus. In Kashmir a Hindu rules Muslims. Serious interference with either of them is liable to provoke reprisals in the other or elsewhere, and to be the signal for a general Hindu-Muslim war. Unless the two Communities positively want a war they will avoid a course of action so calculated to start one.

THE TRADITION OF PERSONAL RULE

Those therefore who think that the States have a great part to play in India's future have justification for their opinion in these larger States. It seems probable that singly or in groups they will continue for many years as distinct units, preserving their own traditions and institutions. It may be that they will link up in some loose federation with other parts of India, as was contemplated in the 1935 Act and provided for in the Cripps' proposals. There is nothing inherently impracticable in such an arrangement. But they will retain their princely rule and dynasties.

Congress, as we have seen, say that they stand for the same measure of democracy and freedom in the States as in the rest of India. In so far as they imply that there must be an assimilation between the democracy of British India and the autocracy of the States they are on firm ground. These sharply contrasted political systems will not continue to exist side by side. But the result of the assimilation may be rather different from what Congress imagines. The conventional Congress view is represented by the following passage from an address delivered by Mr. Rajagopalachari. "Our Princes can to-day, without disturbing the efficiency of administra-

tion, grant representative institutions and constitutional governments on a basis of parliamentary democracy as was done in the British provinces and themselves occupy the royal and exalted position that Governors enjoy in those places with the great and significant addition of a personal affection that they will always command in the hearts of the people."

But in the same address he remarked ambiguously, "The citizens of Indian States are as fit and as ready, or as unfit and as unready, for democracy as citizens of the British provinces are." How fit are they—an oppressed, illiterate, superstitious peasantry, earning a few shillings a month and accustomed for centuries to autocratic rule? Can we expect them to make a success of western democracy? Do we gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?

Whatever may be the outward forms, an essentially authoritarian regime is likely for many years to prevail in India; and among the sources of authority we may be sure to find some, at least, of the existing ruling dynasties. The tradition of personal rule is strong in India and there is a deeply rooted respect for hereditary right, which is closely interwoven with the whole texture of Indian Society. For caste divisions tend to fix a man's place and function in society by rule of hereditary right. It is proper for one man to be a washerman because this is what his father was and for another to be a Ruler for the same reason. The instincts springing from this very ancient social organisation will not be shed by an illiterate people in a night. If Provinces and States become assimilated, it is the pattern of the States rather than of the Provinces which will prove dominant. A quasi-hereditary bureaucracy, tempered by consultative assemblies, is perhaps the political form which will become standard. In any case once States and Provinces cease to be held artificially apart by the presence of a foreign power, the division between them will quickly lose significance and even disappear.

CHAPTER III

A TARGET FOR INDIA

I. WHAT INDIA MUST DO

This long digression into the field of politics started with the thought that a foreign government cannot successfully plan to lift the masses from that abysmal poverty ; for it dare not, and for lack of co-operation, perhaps cannot carry out the revolutionary changes in social and economic structure which are necessary. But economic plans are futile except within the shelter of public peace ; and, owing to the great Hindu-Muslim cleavage there can be no certainty that with the end of foreign rule peaceful ordered life of India will be preserved. The creative impulses, which freedom should release for social and economic reconstruction, may be lost in fratricidal strife. No planning, no paper formulæ can produce agreement. Yet without agreement there will be no peace ; and without peace, economic plans will be mere castles in the air. Political problems cannot therefore be brushed aside as irrelevant to the fundamental issue of Indian poverty. Their solution is a precondition of any sustained economic advance.

Assuming, however, that these problems are more or less satisfactorily solved and that there will be some fairly stable basis of peace and order in India, what economic plans and policies must be adopted to raise the masses from their present low level of life ?

Fundamentally what requires to be done remains the same as ever, viz. : (i) to obtain more produce from the land ; (ii) to draw off into other productive occupations the surplus agricultural population. We have seen that during the present century the Government of India has both professed and, in certain respects, seriously attempted to do both of these ; in particular, agricultural production has been considerably increased. But the net result has been to leave most of the rural masses not much better off than they were before. Production has not increased fast enough to get well ahead of population. Plans will have to be more comprehensive and framed on a bolder and bigger scale if a real and permanent improvement in the condition of the peasant-cultivator is to be achieved. In a few respects the prospects are less favourable than they were forty years

ago ; but in most (always assuming peace and stability) they are more favourable, probably more favourable than they have ever been before. We will note these changes for better or for worse as we go along.

A broad outline sketch of policy, which may be taken as representative of Indian nationalist thought, was given by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1936.

"Fundamentally," he said, "we have to face the land problem . . . and the problem of unemployment which is connected with it. I think nothing short of a large-scale collectivist or co-operative farming will deal effectively with the land question. These wretched small-holdings will then disappear. Production will greatly increase and many other benefits will follow, but unemployment would not be affected thereby. In fact, by scientific farming, it is possible that unemployment might even increase a little, as far as direct employment on the land is concerned, though indirectly other avenues of employment would be opened up. In order to provide employment we must absorb people in industrial development, in cottage industries, in big machine industries, and in the economic development of social services, such as education, hygiene and sanitation . . . If all these things are taken together, I imagine we might go a little way towards the solution of the various problems that confront us."

Nehru subsequently tried through his National Planning Committee to fill in the details of this policy—an enterprise in which the Government of India showed only a mildly hostile interest. But this was in pre-war days before planning had become fashionable. Since then several Provincial Governments have tried to do a little planning on their own, even the Government of India has taken a hand, and a group of leading Indian industrialists have put forward a 15-year development plan for an Indian National Government of the future. This plan, which we shall call the Bombay Plan, will have to be referred to again. But as a general guide to policy it will be convenient to take Nehru's outline sketch.

FIRST PRIORITY : IRRIGATION

This outline suffers from one main defect, viz. : it relies principally, if not entirely, on large-scale collective or co-operative farming to increase agricultural production. But there are other and, in the immediate future, even more important ways of doing this. First and foremost is the old and tried method of extending irrigation. This must be a first priority. Unfortunately there are no longer quite the same golden opportunities as there were 50 years ago. The most profitable schemes have already been completed and the law of Diminishing Returns is now operating with both land and water as limiting factors. In central and southern India the best sites for dams and reservoirs have long since been utilised. In northern

India nearly every drop of water available in the rivers in the winter months is already being drawn off into canals and further progress depends on (a) constructing dams and storing the surplus water of the summer months ; (b) drawing on the sub-soil water by means of electrically driven tube-wells.* Projects of this kind are comparatively costly and present numerous technical difficulties which have not yet been fully overcome. There is also no longer the prospect of bringing under the plough large areas of virgin land. Much of the best "cultivable waste" has already come within the canal systems. About 90 million acres still remain, according to Government statistics, but a great deal of this (no exact figure can be given as no exact survey has been made) is very inferior land and could not in fact be made to yield crops except at a prohibitive cost. Future extensions of irrigation will mean therefore the supply of water to land already cultivated but dependent at present on rainfall, rather than to completely virgin soil.

Such extensions, however, are well worth undertaking ; for irrigation can make an enormous difference to the quantity and quality of the crops which can be grown. In the northern plains of India artificial irrigation is generally indispensable for growing the more valuable crops, e.g., sugarcane, cotton, and vegetables, and in many parts of the country irrigated land will yield four times as much as unirrigated. *To increase irrigation facilities is still far the quickest and surest way of increasing agricultural production ;* And it is still a paying proposition. In the past, irrigation projects have on the average brought in a direct return to Government of 7% to 8%, to say nothing of the indirect benefits accruing to the community as a whole. This is a very handsome return. Looked at from the point of view of the general public welfare, projects which brought in directly only one quarter as much would still be paying propositions. There are still plenty of such projects awaiting execution. But the work requires to be hastened on with even more vigour than in the past. It is reckoned that between 1890 and 1930 the irrigated area was about doubled. The aim should be to double it again in half the time.

SECOND PRIORITY : COMMUNICATION

Second perhaps in importance to the extension of irrigation, and resembling it in requiring heavy capital expenditure, is the improvement of communications. One of the greatest handicaps of Indian agriculture is the lack of adequate roads. Thousands of Indians are many miles from any modern metalled road and a considerable distance from any sort of road maintained by public authority. In wet weather the ordinary dirt roads

*These wells are sunk to a depth of 200-300 ft.

are quite impassable. In dry weather they are just a series of deep ruts, along which bullock-carts painfully creak and groan, bearing only about one-third of the load which they could carry on a good metalled road. Perishable products, e.g., milk, fruit and vegetables, cannot as a rule be got to market in good condition except from villages in the immediate neighbourhood of a town. Consequently there is no incentive to go in for them, although the cultivator could often get a much higher return from his land if he did so. In the Punjab, which has a better system of metalled roads than any other Province in India, there are a few villages from which perishable farm produce is conveyed regularly by lorry to towns 50-60 miles distant. But only a beginning has been made. There is scope for enormous development.

The value to the cultivator of a metalled road can be gauged by his own appreciation of it. There is perhaps no public work which he regards as a greater boon. It far outclasses a hospital or even a high school! It is expensive, no doubt, but not an expensive luxury. It is one of the most potent inducements to the cultivator to overcome his conservatism and caste prejudices and, by resorting to intensive cultivation, to make a more profitable use of his land and his leisure.

THIRD PRIORITY: IMPROVEMENT AND COLLECTIVIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

Metalled roads and irrigation works can be constructed by Government without the cultivator's help. Most other measures of agricultural improvement require his active co-operation. With self-government this may be more readily forthcoming than in the past. One of the most urgent needs is to reduce the huge burden of superfluous cattle. More milk from fewer cows should be the target, and it is one on which a bull's-eye could easily be scored—for India produces many fine breeds of cattle—if the cultivator could be induced to destroy useless animals and refrain from indiscriminate breeding from inferior stocks. But Hindu sentiment in this matter is exceedingly strong and is not confined to the illiterate classes. Those who by virtue of their education should be encouraging modifications of ancient taboos often appear themselves to be wholly dominated by them. There are not at present any signs of any rapid change of sentiment and practice.

The cultivator's active co-operation will also be required in order that better varieties of seed, better rotation of crops and improved types of implements may be rapidly popularised, measures adopted to prevent soil erosion—in some parts of India a most serious matter—and caste prejudices overcome which stand in the way of the most profitable use of the land. Above all his active co-operation will be required if anything

in the nature of collective farming is to be introduced. Nehru is certainly right in believing this to provide the solution of many of India's economic problems. No doubt it is not everywhere applicable, e.g. where crops requiring intensive hand-cultivation are grown. No doubt too it would be a good many years, even if a strong Government used ruthless methods of compulsion, before collective farming could be established on a sufficient scale to have any appreciable effect on productivity. But these are not really arguments against it. Collective farming would not everywhere bring advantages and is beset with many difficulties, but in many parts of India it holds out the best hope of permanently widening the peasant's whole life as well as helping to raise his material standards of living.

Collective farming must, of course, ultimately rest on co-operation. Whatever compulsion may be applied initially, unless the peasants are persuaded voluntarily to co-operate with one another in the farming of the land, the policy must break down. Possibly all the patient effort that has been put into the co-operative movement during the past thirty years will prove not really to have been so fruitless as might appear. At any rate in some villages, in setting out to farm the land co-operatively, we should not be starting absolutely from scratch. The habits of combining for common objects, of keeping accounts and records and of conforming to rules, have to some extent been formed. With a backward, illiterate population this is an important first step.

(a) *ADVANTAGES*

Those who advocate collective farming in India have in mind the formation of Village Co-operative Associations which would include all the landowners, tenants and others concerned with agriculture and would farm all the scattered holdings, as a single unit. The Associations would be responsible through their Executive Councils for all agricultural operations, including the marketing and sale of produce, and would distribute the proceeds among the members in accordance with shares determined roughly by the amount of land, labour, etc., which each contributed. The advantages of such a system would be considerable. It would mean the end of uneconomic fragmented holdings, which admit of no capital improvements, and absurd fields of less than half an acre given over to wheat, barley or similar crops which do not require intensive cultivation. With sizeable units, capital could be profitably invested (e.g. in the sinking of wells), modern implements and methods of cultivation could be introduced on a large scale, and the use of the land planned in a scientific manner. Labour would be concentrated on the richest land with the best irrigation facilities where alone intensive cultivation is possible and profitable. Wheat, millet, grain and similar crops would be grown, as they should be, in large fields with the minimum labour force and, so

far as possible, on land unsuitable for intensive cultivation. The waste of land on boundary marks and of time and energy in transferring animals and implements from one small field to another would be avoided ; and modern machinery (e.g. tractors and engines for working wells) would permit of a great reduction of oxen and their replacement by good dairy cows, notable for their high yield of milk rather than the muscular strength of their progeny. The villager himself, through having to take part in such a considerable enterprise as the co-operative farming of the land of a whole village—involving complicated organisation, large financial transactions, the understanding of accounts and the maintenance of records—would insensibly be metamorphosed from the narrow-minded suspicious illiterate peasant of an immemorial past into an intelligent citizen of the modern world.

(b) DIFFICULTIES

These grandiose schemes can be sketched in a few words. Their detailed realisation in practice would be a wearisome and heartbreaking labour. Merely to start co-operative farming in a single village, with the unanimous consent of all the villagers, would require much careful planning, technical knowledge, and administrative skill. In addition to deciding how best the land could be used, who should perform what tasks and what share of the proceeds each should receive, it would be necessary to make provision for absorbing into industry or otherwise finding employment for a considerable proportion of the villagers ; for the labour force of most Indian villages is in excess of requirements and, as Nehru observed, would become even more so with the introduction of large-scale scientific farming. To provide for the displaced labour of a single village might be fairly easy ; to do so for several thousand would involve elaborate dovetailing of agricultural and industrial plans.

In practice, of course, the unanimous consent of the villagers would not be forthcoming. The peasant is jealous and suspicious of his neighbour ; he likes his own independence and clings to his own little fields and his old ways with tenacious affection. Unused to discipline and prone to act on impulse he might suddenly flare up in violence on any application of compulsion in matters so intimately affecting his whole life. Moreover, only in a few villages would there be men of sufficient character, education and influence to manage the affairs of a village co-operative farm. Trained officials would be required in large numbers both to start farms going and then to assist and supervise their management. These officials do not at present exist.

It is fairly clear that in the immediate future there is not much prospect of doing more than try out collective farming quasi-experimentally in

a limited number of selected villages. Collective farming is still only a distant target, and though it should not be lost sight of and though it is high time that a few long-range shots were taken at it, we cannot at present expect any large number of hits !

INDUSTRIAL PRIORITIES : HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER

We pass on to the second part of Nehru's programme. He proposes to absorb the surplus agricultural population mainly by industrial development—both big machine industries and small cottage industries. Industry depends on motive power, and we have already noticed that one of the reasons why Government's professed intentions to industrialise India have produced so little result was the lack of cheap power. It is therefore, relevant to consider what power can be made available for the development of industry. India produces little mineral oil; and to transport coal to Madras, Bombay and the north-west of India all the way from the coalfields of Bengal and Bihar is very expensive. Hence attention has increasingly been turned to the possibility of utilizing water-power for the generation of electricity; and for areas at a distance from the coalfields this holds out the best hopes for the future. The cost tends to be rather high as, though India has many large rivers, convenient falls are often at a great distance from the centres of population where power is required. Moreover, the water available in Indian rivers is in certain months small and has to be supplemented with water stored in expensive reservoirs; or additional steam-driven plants have to be erected which can be brought into operation when the rivers are low. Nevertheless for many parts of India hydro-electricity is the cheapest and most efficient form of power which can be made available, and its development, like the extension of irrigation, must be a first priority. The two are in fact intimately connected; for it is possible that water used for canal irrigation could also be used for the production of hydro-electric power, and hydro-electricity can certainly be used to work tube-wells which, as already mentioned, will probably be a principal means of extending irrigation in the future. Hydro-electricity may indeed revolutionise rural economy. It is perhaps not fanciful to foresee a day when, besides supplying power for small village industries, it will replace the dung-cake for cooking purposes and thus enable the land to obtain the natural manure of which at present it is so largely deprived.

Industrialisation has long been dear to the Indian nationalist and very rightly. Just on this account it has become the subject of propagandist statements. When complaint is made that India's industrial development has been retarded, it is retorted that India ranks eighth among the indus-

trial countries of the world—a perfectly true statement of fact but one that it is liable to convey an essentially false impression ; for it is easy to forget that India is a “country” with a population of 390 million and almost as large as Europe without Russia. The possible benefits to be derived from industrialisation are often decried. For instance, by dividing the total value of articles imported into India by the number of the population it can be represented that the production in India of all her present imports would only mean an increase in productive power of Rs. 4 per head. To a man with a wife and two children earning only Rs. 10 per mensem an annual bonus of Rs. 16 would not be unacceptable. But the calculation is misleading. It omits to take into account that an increase in productive power tends to open up still further possibilities of production. Moreover, many of the exports which pay for the present imports are raw materials which, if retained in the country, could themselves be used for developing further industries.

Another calculation has sometimes been put forward viz. that to double in 10 years India's pre-war industrial production would absorb less than 2% of the agricultural population. But the correct conclusion from this is not that industrialisation will bring quite negligible gains, but that India's present industrial production is very small in relation to her population and that we should aim not merely at doubling it but at multiplying it three or four or five times. The authors of the Bombay Plan propose to multiply it five times in fifteen years.

On the other hand it is true that exaggerated hopes have often been entertained both regarding the ease and rapidity with which industry, and especially large-scale industry, can be extended in India, and regarding the benefits likely to accrue from it. The cost and the trouble involved in converting an illiterate villager into an efficient skilled workman have not always been fully appreciated. The history of the steel industry in India stands as a warning against over-optimism. It took years of protection and government bounties to put this industry firmly on its feet, although it started with every apparent natural advantage. It may also be questioned whether the villager will be happier as a factory worker exploited by capitalists or by a ruthless State than he is as a peasant cultivator exploited by landlords and moneylenders.

However, the fact remains that rapid industrialisation on western lines is the aim of all Indian nationalist leaders, except Mr. Gandhi ; and viewed in the light of modern values it is a sensible aim. Without it a substantial raising of the standard of living is impossible.

There is ample scope for industrial development. India possesses varied raw materials, e.g. cotton, jute, oil-seeds, leather, iron, bauxite timber and a huge internal market which with a slight increase of consumption per head will admit of enormous expansion. Compared with most countries she is well off in these respects ; and power, as we have seen,

can be made available, though not quite so cheaply as could be wished. If there is adequate protection against foreign competition, the handicaps due to lack of cheap capital and trained skill can be overcome—at a price.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT MUST BE PLANNED

And that price is worth paying, so long as the industries developed are in conformity with India's natural resources. But there must be co-ordinated planning so that industries which are inter-related and inter-dependent are started simultaneously.

The authors of the Bombay Plan have very properly emphasised that in the initial stages certain basic industries must get priority over others, because they are the foundation "on which the economic structure envisaged in the plan will have to be erected." Included in these basic industries are the following principal groups :

- Mining and metallurgy—iron and steel, aluminium, manganese.
- Engineering—machinery of all kinds including agricultural machinery and implements.
- Transport—railway engines and wagons, aircraft, automobiles, ships.
- Chemicals—heavy chemicals, fertilisers, dyes, etc.
- Cement.

The iron and steel industry is already well-established and has been greatly strengthened in every way as a result of the war. Tata's is the largest steel works in the British Empire. The cement industry is also well-established and could be easily expanded in response to increased demand, e.g. for roadmaking and building. Most of the other industries are either still in their infancy or have only been born during the war or do not exist at all. But there is no inherent reason why all of them should not flourish in India. At present there is a lack of trained skill, and Indian labour is inefficient. But trained skill can be acquired and inefficiency can be cured. Anyone who has seen how in the army simple peasants have been taught to handle complicated engines of war or has had occasion to admire the skill and resource of an illiterate lorry driver, will not subscribe to the view that Indian labour is congenitally incapable of improvement. But improvement will take time and has to be paid for.

For some years it may have to be paid for by protection and bounties. The real cost to the community will, however, be less than might appear. For the Indian peasant is not already fully employed in terms of productive work. As we have repeatedly mentioned, he is under-employed and pitifully unproductive. Economically it is better that he should

inefficiently manufacture inferior yet expensive motors than that he should do nothing ; and in time he will learn to manufacture good motors which are also cheap.

LIGHT INDUSTRIES AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Though priority has to be given to basic industries the authors of the Bombay Plan recognise that consumption goods industries must also be developed simultaneously "so as to meet at least our essential requirements." At present many things in common use, for the manufacture of which raw materials are available in India, are still being imported in large quantities from abroad. The appropriate Indian industries require to be started or further developed where they already exist. We may cite as illustrations the following :

Textile Industries—cotton, silk and wool.

Bicycle industry.

Glass industry.

Paper industry.

Oil-crushing industry—manufacture of soap and vegetable fats.

Tobacco industry.

Most of these industries have already been started, but all of them are, to a greater or less degree capable of expansion merely to meet *existing* domestic demand. For instance up to the war cotton goods, glass and paper were still being imported into India in considerable quantities. So, too, were soaps and vegetable fats. Yet India possesses the natural resources for the production of these commodities ; indeed raw cotton and oil seeds are among her principal exports. As in the case of the basic industries, expansion can be secured, at a cost, if the appropriate measures are taken, e.g. higher tariffs or restriction of imports.

So far we have only considered large or medium scale industries. But Nehru in his outline of policy referred also to cottage industries and in the Bombay Plan it is stated, "It is an essential part of our plan for the organisation of industries that adequate scope should be provided for small-scale and cottage industries along with large-scale industries." But though planners usually pay lip-service to small-scale industries they rarely indicate what is to be done for them. Of course village handicraft and unorganised rural industries exist and have existed for centuries in India. The village still retains something of its old self-sufficiency—it has its carpenter, leather-worker, blacksmith, weaver and potter. There are still relics of the old rural industries, which before the influx of factory products,

turned out goods of the finest workmanship and artistic design. And a number of industries connected with the processing of agricultural staples, e.g. flour and rice milling, oil crushing, cotton ginning, have stood up fairly well to the competition of modern large-scale methods. These might hope to expand with an increase of agricultural production; and something can be done—and is being done—for the old handicraft industries by organising better marketing facilities and by stimulating through propaganda—as Mr. Gandhi has attempted—a demand for their products. But in view of the attention which has been paid in recent years both by Government and by nationalist leaders to these traditional handicraft industries it would be a mistake to look for any great expansion. And new industries are yet to be suggested.

SOCIAL SERVICES : HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The last item on Nehru's programme is the development of the social services. Despite considerable expansion during the inter-war period, these are still by modern standards rudimentary. It is reckoned that there is only one doctor per 9,000 persons and one nurse per 86,000, compared with one per 776 and one per 435 in the United Kingdom. Most towns have no modern drainage system and no proper piped and protected water supply. Small-pox is still prevalent, typhoid very common. Maternity and child welfare work has hardly been started. Education is still so backward that in 1941 the percentage of literacy was only 12.2.

It is possible to draw up paper schemes for providing every village with a school and a dispensary and for making the whole population healthy and literate in 15 years. Such schemes, though in existing conditions of Indian poverty quite impracticable, have their uses; for they give some idea of the magnitude of the work to be done as and when resources are increased. In the field of education the Government of India's adviser, Mr. Sargent, has prepared a scheme designed to provide the barest minimum of education for which India ought to plan in the period of post-war reconstruction. Under this scheme compulsory and free "basic" education is to be given to all boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 14 and further "higher" education (either technical or academic) to about one out of every five. There is to be a vast increase in the number of teachers, especially women teachers—remember that considerable sections of the population still observe purdah—and the total annual charge on public funds, when the scheme is fully established will be Rs. 277 crores compared with Rs. 17½ crores in 1940-41.

If all the social services were expanded on this sort of scale the employment created would be considerable. But dispensing medicine, vaccinating

babies or even teaching arithmetic cannot be classed as "productive activities" in quite the same way as growing corn or making boots; and it may be rather dangerous to think and speak as though they could. Because an educated society is more productive than an uneducated, it is too often tacitly assumed that education will *per se* necessarily increase a society's productivity. For instance in the Bombay Plan a writer is quoted with apparent approval as saying "Extreme forms of poverty will prevail amongst the masses in India as long as the overwhelming majority of the Indian people are able to neither read nor write." But this is to put the cart before the horse. It is the opposite which is true, viz.—the majority of the Indian people will be unable to read or write so long as they remain extremely poor. So long as India's per capital output of consumable goods is extremely low she cannot afford such luxuries as education and good health. In existing conditions neither of them will by themselves increase output. Where you have 100 men available to do a job requiring only 50 it does not much matter if a third of them are ill. This is the position today in regard to Indian agriculture. Similarly an Indian villager with a fragmented holding of one acre will not necessarily get more out of it through being able to read and write. Indeed if you give him this accomplishment he may well lose it again because it is so useless to him.

One should, therefore, be cautious of trying to realise these educational and medical schemes or of hoping to draw surplus labour from the land into expanded social services *except pari passu with an increased output of physical goods*. War-time finance has given rise to the notion that many things seemingly impossible can be accomplished by the simple device of "creating" money. The authors of the Bombay Plan propose to finance their schemes partly in this very way. "There is nothing unsound," they write, "in creating this money because it is meant to increase the productive capacity of the nation and in the long run is of a self-liquidating character."

But it must not only be *meant* to increase productive capacity; it must also in fact do so; and this not in some loose specious sense but in the crude literal sense of leading to the output of a greater volume of actual physical goods. Otherwise it is liable to be calamitous. In the long run a nation, like a man, has to cut its coat according to its cloth. India cannot afford to spend on education, health and sanitation fifteen or sixteen times as much as she is spending at present until changes in her economic structure or some stroke of good fortune hold out a real prospect of her becoming more productive, i.e. richer. She will then be able to afford and, in the literal sense, profit by more education and better health, for in the appropriate social and economic conditions education and good health do increase productivity besides being valuable in themselves.

FINANCE : THE STERLING BALANCES

This brings us to the whole question of finance. Irrigation, roads, hydro-electric power, industrialisation—all the plans which have been discussed—demand a large outlay of capital. They also demand a plentiful supply of technical skill, and this, if it does not exist in the country, has to be hired from abroad. Hitherto India has lacked both ; the lack of them has been a principal cause of low productivity. Unless they can be quickly made available in considerable quantities, none of the plans which have been sketched will bear timely fruit.

In this matter the war has been for India a stroke of good fortune. Almost unnoticed she has been gathering in windfalls of wealth. Britain's demand for war supplies has stimulated production and enabled her to run up against Britain a heavy bill. In consequence, she has already ceased to be Britain's debtor and has become her creditor. She will end the war with an accumulation of capital and a supply of technical skill such as she has never possessed before. Economically her prospects will be as rosy as politically they may seem black.

The increase of technical skill in the five years of war cannot be precisely measured, for the relevant statistics have not been published. Though it still falls far short of India's needs—for many years to come foreign technicians will have to be hired in large numbers—the increase since 1939 is far greater than could have been looked for in five years of peace. The war has supplied the stimulus, and indirectly, through her purchase of Indian supplies, Britain has defrayed a great part of the cost. The mere enlistment of over two million men in the armed forces is in itself an appreciable gain, for a fair proportion of them will in the course of their service acquire some technical skill or knowledge.

As regards the accumulation of capital it is known that since the war India has repaid all her sterling debt (amounting to £360,000,000) and has run up sterling balances in London amounting to £700,000,000. It is safe to assume that by the end of the war these will have swollen to £1,000,000,000.

This large sum will be available for the purchase of industrial plant and equipment and the hiring of technical and managerial skill. In India's own interests this is how it should be used. There are some Indians who urge that it should be devoted first to the acquisition of British commercial investments in India, e.g. in tea, jute, mines, banking, etc., which are believed to total £200,000,000–£250,000,000. Their views are probably coloured to some extent by antiquated fears of British economic and financial domination. But on a narrow calculation of financial profit they have some justification. For it will not be possible immediately after the war to transfer from Britain to India a thousand million pounds worth of

goods and services within a short period of months or two or three years. A fair portion of the debt of £1,000,000,000 will have to be funded, and the rate of interest which Britain will agree to pay on it will almost certainly be less than the average return on British Commercial investments in India. It is plausible therefore, to suggest that India's sterling assets should be used to acquire these investments. But on a wider view of India's needs and interests, it is doubtful whether this policy would be wise. In order to carry out her programme of development India will not only need all the capital that she has already accumulated and all the further capital that she can provide from her own resources; she will also need additional foreign capital—in the Bombay Plan a figure of Rs. 700 crores is given. This being so, the immediate acquisition of foreign investments already existing in the country might be wasteful and even positively harmful. Wasteful, because, in acquiring these investments, assets (i.e. the sterling balances) would be consumed without any real addition being made to India's capital equipment; harmful, because too great eagerness to lay hands on foreign investments might discourage further foreign lending. India's real interests require that the sterling balances should be liquidated in the provision over a period of years of a steady flow of British goods and services such as will enlarge India's productive capacity.

It may be assumed that a large portion of these balances will be used by the Indian Government for purchases on its own account, e.g. in connection with irrigation and hydro-electric works which will be carried out under public auspices. The extent to which Government should also undertake or control the expansion of industry is a controversial matter which cannot be discussed here; but it seems probable that a considerable field will have to be left for private enterprise operating within some general framework of State control. If so, some portion of the sterling balances might have to be made available to private enterprise on suitable terms for the purchase of capital goods for approved purposes.

Similarly additional capital obtained by borrowing from abroad may have to be utilised in part by private enterprise; but Government would probably exercise considerable control so as to direct the flow of foreign capital to the best advantage of the country as a whole.

In addition to the sterling balances India possesses quite an accumulation of capital in the form of precious metals hoarded within the country. The volume of this hoarded wealth is largely a matter of conjecture. It may be in the neighbourhood of £750,000,000. The Indian peasant has often been blamed in the past for his unproductive hoarding of gold and silver; but during the economic depression of the thirties these hoards stood him in good stead. After this recent experience of the advantage of hoarding, he will not very readily give up the habit or disgorge what he has already laid by. However, as the authors of the Bombay Plan

put it, "a part of this hoarded wealth should become available for capital investment if . . . a national government comes into power in whom the people have full faith." This is one of the matters in regard to which full self-government may produce a favourable change of popular habit.

These existing accumulations of capital, together with fresh foreign borrowing, should provide adequate resources with which to embark on a big development programme; and once a successful start was made, further savings* should become available within the country to carry on the work. It should not be necessary—as was necessary in U.S.S.R.—to compel the whole population to tighten their belts in order to find the capital and hire the technical skill with which to set the ball rolling.

BEHIND THE PLANNING THERE MUST BE A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

We have so far tacitly assumed not only that there will be peace in India but also that a national government will come into existence with some measure of economic control over the whole country. In the Bombay Plan, the maintenance of economic unity is stated to be an essential condition of effective planning. "No development of the kind we have proposed," its author writes, "will be feasible except on the basis of a central directing authority which enjoys sufficient popular support and possesses the requisite powers and jurisdiction."

As regards popular support there can be no argument. For the successful execution of plans of the scope and character contemplated popular support is essential and will not be secured now except by a Government which is patently Indian and not foreign. Pending the formation of such a Government or Governments much useful preparatory work can and should be done. Development plans can be drawn up for all the major Provinces and states. These can be collated and dovetailed into one another on both a regional and an all-India basis. Rough estimates can be made of the amount of capital required and how the capital likely to be available should be allocated. But the drive needed for successful execution must come from an Indian Government or Governments freed from taint of foreign control.

The necessity of a single central directing authority is not quite so clear. It is desirable no doubt; the larger the areas which are treated as single economic units the better. But much effective planning can be done even on the assumption that Indian unity will not be fully preserved. For instance the general lines of the economic development of North-West

* Estimated by the authors of the Bombay Plan at £200,000,000 a year. This figure is very conjectural.

India (which might form Pakistan) will have to be much the same whether it remains attached to the rest of India or whether it becomes a separate State of its own. Even if there is no partition, economic planning will have to pay considerable regard to local needs and feelings. What might be strictly in the best economic interests of India as a whole will often have to be modified to satisfy provincial ambitions or to reconcile conflicting interests. In any case the measures required to raise the Indian masses from their present poverty will be broadly the same, whether India remains India or whether it divides into Hindustan and Pakistan.

POPULATION INCREASE : FIRST STEPS TO CONTROL

In this brief survey of the possibilities of future economic progress there are two factors which we have not taken seriously into account, viz. the trend of population and the character of the people. In a sense both of these are unknowables ; for though we know what they are today, we do not know what modifications they may admit of in the future. Our conclusions regarding them though they may be stated dogmatically are really only conjectures.

It was mentioned earlier on that all the efforts to expand agricultural production had only sufficed to keep it a little ahead of the growth of population. Between 1900 and 1930 it is reckoned that the production of foodstuffs and raw materials increased by 30% ; but meanwhile the population increased by 19%. There was a fairly comfortable margin but not a big enough one to raise very materially the general standard of living. Since then the population has gone ahead faster—it increased by 15% in the single decade 1931-1941, and though the war has stimulated production and especially industrial production, it has also held up certain schemes of agricultural development, so that it is doubtful whether on balance since 1930 the population-production ratio has much improved. And admittedly it should be very greatly improved ; for a large proportion of the population are underfed. On the other hand the position has not suddenly taken a turn for the worse nor is it likely to do so in the near future. The famine in Bengal in 1943 gave rise to a number of alarmist statements about population out-running food supply. These were not based on any proper analysis of the facts. India has for some years been a small net importer of food grains, though a large net exporter of other agricultural produce, e.g. cotton and oil-seeds. The fundamental cause of the Bengal famine was simply the cutting off of food-grain imports owing to lack of shipping and the loss of the Burma rice. It was not in any way due to a rapid increase of population overtaking and out-running production. The developments of the past few years give no ground

whatever for a sudden access of alarm but rather for a certain degree of mild optimism. We have seen that since the war India has been converted from a debtor to a creditor nation and has been accumulating capital and adding to her industrial skill as she has never done before. Though still poor, she is well placed to secure a great expansion of productive power. In these circumstances it is strange indeed and surely quite irrational to suppose that production, which has been steadily keeping a little ahead of population, is now just in the point of falling behind it. During the next 40 years it should keep ahead by at least as much as in the last.

But to make any real impression on Indian poverty something very much better than this is wanted. Is there then any prospect of the margin being widened not merely by more rapid increase of productivity but by some reduction of the population pressure? There is no likelihood of the pressure being relieved by emigration, for the countries which still have open spaces do not freely admit Indian immigrants. The question therefore, really comes to this—whether one may hope that population will be checked by some deliberate change of social habit.

There are two social customs in India which have a direct effect on population, viz. child-marriage and the Hindu prohibition of widow re-marriage. Social reformers are anxious to see both customs modified. But obviously the second is a check on population and its modification will enhance the rate of increase. As for child-marriage, the usual assumption is that its abolition would have the opposite effect because the period of women's childbearing would be curtailed. But it is by no means certain that this assumption is correct; for it may be that on the average premature child-bearing, by weakening the constitution, reduces rather than increases a woman's total reproductive capacity. In any case modification of the custom of child-marriage is only likely to come about as part of a process of general social enlightenment, which would be accompanied, *inter alia*, by a steep fall in the rate of infant mortality (at present about 170 per 1,000). This alone would more than compensate for any reduction in the total number of births.

A number of Indian writers have advocated the introduction of birth-control. But most of them have admitted that with a population nearly 90% of which is still illiterate there is no immediate prospect of the practice of birth control being adopted save by a tiny upper class. "If there is anything in this whole range of Western life which is very difficult for India to adopt," writes one of them,* "it is this mode of limiting families. Even if they are made to understand it, they will be horrified at the idea of practising it. Long years of strenuous efforts and propaganda must pass before such a remedy is widely adopted in this country. Any hope of getting an immediate relief from this measure cannot therefore be justified in the least."

**The Population Problem of India* by B. T. Randive.

If this conclusion is accepted we can look for no short cut to prosperity through change in the population trend. A substantial raising of the standard of living must precede birth control ; it will not be produced by it. The authors of the Bombay Plan have assumed an increase in population during the next 15 years of 5,000,000 per annum—a rate disclosed by the last census for the years 1931-41. This is a wise assumption.

None-the-less in favourable areas no opportunity of popularising birth control should be neglected. "Strenuous efforts and propaganda" should begin now. For India's large population is increasing at a rapid rate, comparable with that of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., despite the fact that compared with those countries mortality in India is very high and could and should be reduced. If a reduction took place without any decrease in the present birth rate, the population would begin to shoot up so fast as to nullify all possible effects of increased production, and India would soon be condemned to a falling instead of a rising standard of living. It is important, therefore, to begin to prepare now for the time when mass birth-control propaganda may be necessary.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE INDIAN CHARACTER

The character of the people remains to be considered. On the one hand there are the educated classes—a trifling fraction of the whole ; on the other hand there is the vast mass of illiterate peasants.

"Of all the factors making for prosperous agriculture," reported the Royal Commission in 1928, "by far the most important is the outlook of the peasant himself." The peasant is still the backbone of India. Whether he remains on the land or allows himself to be converted into an industrial worker, his attitude will largely determine the future of India. Will he be willing to throw off the inertia and fatalism of centuries ? Will he respond to national leaders if they call upon him to copy the methods and materialism of the West ?

It is significant that Mr. Gandhi, the one leader whom all the peasants of India reverence, is an ascetic, vowed to abstinence and poverty, who has repeatedly proclaimed his "non-co-operation" with material civilisation. He is symbolic of an atmosphere and a scale of values with which Europe has long grown unfamiliar. For Europe in losing the name of Christendom also forgot the real nature of Christianity, which in its essence and origin was other-worldly—an urgent summons to repent and take one's eyes off those mundane targets with which we are now so busily engrossed. But peasant India still resembles mediæval Christendom, still holds to the values of the ancient religions, still believes that this life is but a vale of tears or at best an illusion, still exalts God above Mammon, however

lamentably it may serve the latter. The poor in India do not think that they ought to be richer. Their lot is such as God ordained—probably the inevitable outcome of previous existences.

Gandhi, as the living embodiment of this faith, is the natural, the inevitable leader of peasant India. A sort of St. Francis turned Pope, he would have been as much at home in mediæval Europe as he is in India to-day. In his acceptance of poverty and his rejection of the methods and values of the modern world he presents a rationalised version of the peasant's fatalism and instinctive resistance to changes which threaten the whole system of his life and of his faith.

But Gandhi will pass away and the peasant's resistance be overcome. In India, as elsewhere, an age of faith will give place to an age of reason. The poor will be persuaded that their lot, ordained by God, can be altered by man, that they too with a little effort, can enjoy the good things of the world ; and, having tasted them, they will forget that they are " illusions " and will strive for more. For better or for worse India will be converted to the aims and the ways of the West. Gandhi's mantle will fall on no Elisha. The outlook of the peasant will change and is changing. He will respond to the siren voices of his own leaders calling him to enrich himself.

What of the educated classes ? Much is heard of plans for making the illiterate literate ; little of plans for making the literate leaders. Yet the latter are really the more pressingly needed. In India the forces of evil are at present enormously strong. Only the rarest virtue can rise above them. Most young men of the Indian middle classes have no chance of developing the requisite strength of character. Both at home and at school they are inadequately disciplined and they are brought up in a world in which greed, falsehood, suspicion and communal hatred prevail. It is impossible in a few sentences to assign the causes for this state of affairs or to apportion the blame—everyone who has had anything to do with India must bear some share of it ; and these are painful matters on which perhaps the less said by a foreigner the better. But it is necessary to recognise facts. India's educated few will lead themselves and the uneducated masses to disaster unless the rising generation can establish higher standards of sincerity and integrity and thus promote in society at large greater mutual tolerance and mutual trust. On this subject however it is impertinent and useless to proffer advice.

INDIA AND WORLD SECURITY

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to indicate in rough outline the means whereby India may be transformed from a land of half-starved peasants into a modern state. One of the necessary condi-

tions is political independence. But independence may itself destroy another of the necessary conditions ; for it may precipitate a breakdown of ordered life and stable Government. This is the crucial dilemma of the Indian situation ; and it is a dilemma not only for India and Britain but also for the United Nations and the world at large. For geographically India occupies a strategic position and potentially is one of the world's great powers. Already China is being classed as such. India is forgotten. Yet in size, resources and population India can challenge comparison with China. And if India is still only a great power potentially, so too is China. For China is not yet fully united and is terribly exhausted by war. India will at any rate end the war with territories unravaged, resources intact, coffers full and a people accustomed to the habits of peace. As a potential world power India has heavy obligations to discharge to any future world order. If she realises her potentiality, she must necessarily become dominant in the whole area from Australia to the West Coast of Africa and a vital factor in the protection of that area from internal or external aggression. But if she fails, she may well become a field for intrigue and conflicting ambitions and a source of far-reaching insecurity. Much therefore hangs on India's successful elevation from a backward condition of semi-colonial dependence to the status of a world power.

CHAPTER IV

A TARGET FOR INDIA

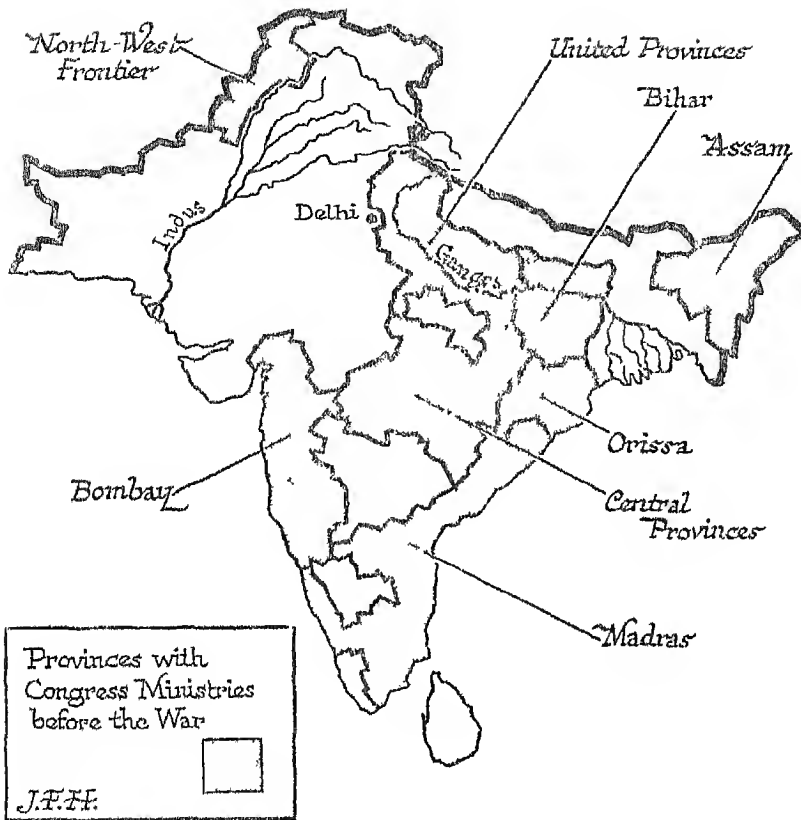
2. WHAT BRITAIN MUST DO

What part have the British to play in the transformation of India?

In the economic sphere there is still immense scope for British talent. For many years to come India will need to hire from abroad technical and managerial skill. Despite all the quarrels and ill-feelings of recent times she would rather hire it from Britain than from anywhere else. "We have known the British for a thousand years," says the Indian peasant, and his observation, though historically inexact, testifies to a very real sense of kinship that has grown up between the two peoples. Sentiment and convenience will combine to favour British technical skill, if it is dissociated from any form of supremacy or dictation. "We are anxious to see a free India," says the Indian industrialist Mr. G. D. Birla, "developed agriculturally and industrially with the collaboration of England not as a master but as a friend. . . . We want British guidance, designs, blue-prints and skill, for which we are prepared to pay, but the control must be in our hands. We will welcome British help and capital if they are forthcoming but if they are not we can get them elsewhere."

In the political sphere the British have a less easy and less attractive part. Let Mr. Gandhi speak. "British rule in India in any shape or form, must end," he says. "You have to withdraw irrespective of the wishes of anybody here. You do not need the consent of a slave to give him his freedom. The slave often hugs the chains of slavery. You have to tear them asunder and throw them away. You must withdraw because it is your duty to do so, and not to wait for the unanimous consent of all the sections or groups in India."

These are hard sayings, not readily intelligible or acceptable to Englishmen. Yet they are largely true. For it is no longer sufficient for us to say to India, "We will withdraw as soon as you agree among yourselves." That may be tantamount to saying "We will *never* withdraw"; that is, indeed, how many Indians interpret it. Rather we have to say "Whether you agree among yourselves or not, we are going to withdraw."



The great merit of the Cripps declaration was that it gave a promise of complete independence immediately after the war without any qualifications regarding prior agreement among the major political parties. The declaration proceeded on the tacit assumption that a sufficient measure of agreement would in fact be forthcoming and that in any case the major Hindu-Muslim disagreement would be got over by the "non-accession" principle. But suppose (and this is not a fanciful supposition) the degree of agreement presumed by the Cripps declaration is not in fact forthcoming. Suppose some major section of Indian opinion refuses altogether to recognise the authority of the constitution-making body which we have proposed should be set up. Or suppose this constitution-making body is unable to produce a constitution which commands any general measure of assent. What then?

THE RISK OF ANARCHY

Englishmen have not squarely faced up to this question, which is, after all, still only a hypothetical one. But in many people's minds there is a vague assumption that there will be a continuance in some form of British control; and this is a dangerous assumption, liable to promote a policy of aimless drift. Such a policy, though it may temporarily ensure a continuance of peace and order in India, provides no solution of any of India's problems and will greatly embitter Indo-British relations. It is a policy to be avoided, and there is no certainty that it will be avoided unless English people clearly grasp that the time has come for them to divest themselves once and for all of political power in India. If the method of doing this outlined in the Cripps' offer proves impracticable, because Indians cannot agree among themselves, *then some other method must be found*. Indian disagreement must not be regarded as morally excusing or as morally compelling our continuance as masters. As masters we must withdraw.

"And leave India to God, in modern parlance to anarchy," as Mr. Gandhi suggested? It would be dishonest to pretend that there is *no* risk of this. But even in the most favourable circumstances there must be *some* risk. Even if at the outset the major political parties reached agreement among themselves and an independent India got away to a good start, it is possible that in a few years ordered life would break down. We cannot predict what India will make of her own destiny once she is put in charge of it.

It is, of course, true that *prima facie* the risk of anarchy will be smaller the greater the degree of agreement that exists at the outset. It may seem reasonable to accept a small risk but to decline a big one—reasonable therefore to refuse to surrender all political power unless there is some broad measure of agreement between the principal political parties. But great or small the risk sooner or later has to be run. More procrastination will neither avert nor lessen it. It is quite idle to suppose that if we retain control in some form for a while longer—events will somehow take a favourable turn—something or other will turn up to promote agreement and to enhance the prospects of peace and order in an independent India. Unfortunately the opposite is true. Our continued presence as a third party with controlling power, always on the point of abdicating, but always postponing it, will encourage intransigence. Meanwhile our own relations with India will become more bitterly envenomed and all that might be contributed to world unity by the unique Indo-British association will be lost. By delay and hesitation therefore we incur a certain and heavy loss for no corresponding gain.

Nevertheless to some Englishmen all this will appear unconvincing.

They will consider it fantastically irresponsible to suggest that we should deliberately run the risk of a breakdown of ordered life in India—a breakdown which might endanger world security and cost millions of Indian lives. They have a keen solicitude for the Indian masses (though perhaps they have no personal knowledge of them) and cannot conceive that a course of action which appears to endanger their welfare can possibly be right. Yet Mr. Gandhi, who claims to represent the “dumb millions” of India, is asking us to take such a course. Mr. Gandhi, who knows them better and feels for them more deeply than any Englishman, wants us in *their* interests to run the risk of anarchy. Is not this significant?

THE PROBLEM OF TRANSFERRING POWER

Probably the risk of anarchy appears to many Englishmen much greater than it does to Mr. Gandhi—it appears to them in fact almost equal to a certainty. Obviously no one could contemplate with equanimity a course of action bound to plunge the whole of India into anarchy. But the risk is not equal to a certainty. It is unrealistic to speak as though the Viceroy would leave India on Monday and civil war begin on Tuesday. Unless we were violently expelled from India we should have to arrange to hand over to someone—to some definite group or groups of persons—the political power which we at present exercise; and for a time at least the functions of Government would be more or less successfully carried on by those persons. In default of Indian agreement we should ourselves have to decide who they should be. There would be no lack of claimants. Our wisdom would be displayed in discerning what power could most safely be entrusted to which people. If we chose well, the persons put in control of the various forces of Government would have as much chance of preserving internal peace and order as those who might come to the front as a result of some Indian agreement. They would also be quite as capable of making and keeping agreements with Britain to the United Nations in regard to India's external defence and the discharge of her obligations to a world order.

It is not at present possible—and it would not be politic—to indicate in detail what sort of power should be entrusted to which persons. One thing however is fairly clear. The less the degree of agreement reached among Indians themselves, the less the probability that the political power at present exercised by the Viceroy and Government of India could be handed over, as it were, intact to any single group of Indians. For a time at least it would have to be divided; for it would be impossible to find or to create any single group of Indians capable of exercising that degree of control over the different Provinces of India (let alone the States)

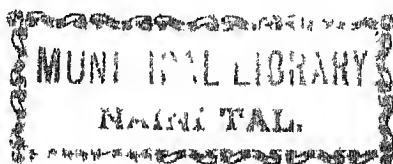
at present exercised by the Viceroy and Government of India. *Ex hypothesi*, consent would be lacking. And physical force would also be lacking. For the Government of India has no physical force at its disposal except the armed might of Britain; and *ex hypothesi* that will not be available.

In the Provinces (and larger States) the position is quite otherwise. In every one of them there either exists already or could be found groups of men who would be able to command that measure of consent and of physical force necessary for the discharge of the functions of Government. The force consists of the police—disciplined bodies of men, recruited and trained by the Provincial Governments and accustomed to obey them. A Provincial Government can, if necessary, quell its unruly subjects with its police. But with what could a Central Government of India quell its unruly Provinces, if they did not voluntarily obey its commands?

If then there is no general Hindu-Muslim agreement we should probably have to start with the Provinces and States, and transfer to them or to such aggregations of them as might *voluntarily* coalesce, those powers which are at present concentrated in the Central Government. It might turn out that different parts of India would enjoy rather different fortunes. In some there might be peace and ordered progress; in others chaos and confusion. Peace and order might gradually spread from one part to another; or chaos and confusion might extend their sway. Some parts might preserve a close connection with Britain, while others broke away along paths untried. In some Englishmen might be able to exercise a liberal and healthy influence, while in others their advice was scorned.

All this, it may be said, is idle speculation. It is foolish to consider what we should do in conditions which have not yet arisen. For the present we are committed to the course of action set forth in the Cripps offer. Only if and when that proves impracticable need we consider alternatives. But this is to misunderstand the psychology of the present situation. A cardinal element in it is Indians' distrust of our good faith; and this distrust must continue so long as our determination to hand over power remains in doubt. At present our determination is qualified, not absolute. It is still hedged around with some "ifs" and "buts," and even seems likely to disappear altogether if Indians cannot themselves settle their own differences. The grim spectre of anarchy, the heavy burden of our supposed responsibilities to the Indian masses, the strategic importance of India both for world security and for the security of the scattered interests and territories of the British Commonwealth preclude us from firmly resolving, without any mental reservations, to sweep away the last vestiges of British domination. But so long as that resolve is infirm, there will be distrust and our dealings with India will not be successful. The Cripps offer holds; but our resolve must hold, even if the Cripps offer fails. By hook or by crook British *rule* must be brought to an end. Our influence must be exercised, if at all, in some new and indirect manner.

"Every Englishman," says Mr. Gandhi, "has to dismount from the horse he is riding and cease to be the monarch of all he surveys and identify himself with the humblest of us. The moment he does so, he will be recognised as a member of the family." This may or may not be liquidation of empire ; but it is the way in which the British are most likely to contribute to the well-being and happiness of India.



SUMMARY

The objectives of policy may be briefly summarised as follows :—

1. POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.

(A) The achievement of Indian Independence with the minimum risk of a breakdown of India's ordered life; either (and preferably).

(i) on the basis of Hindu-Muslim agreement with India's unity preserved

or (ii) on the basis of Hindu-Muslim agreement with India partitioned

or (iii) in default of Hindu-Muslim agreement on the basis of such constitutional settlement as Britain may consider most just and practicable. This will probably involve at the outset the break-up of Indian political unity and the grant of complete independence to existing Provinces and States or to such groups of them as may be persuaded voluntarily to form federations.

(B) A subsidiary objective is to liquidate the smaller Native States and to harmonise the larger ones with the neighbouring Provinces of British India.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES.

(A) To increase production by

(i) Improvement of agriculture which can be achieved by

Extension of irrigation.

Reduction of useless cattle.

Collective farming.

Better rural communications.

(ii) Industrialisation which can be achieved by the use of sterling assets and of additional capital, partly domestic and partly foreign, for

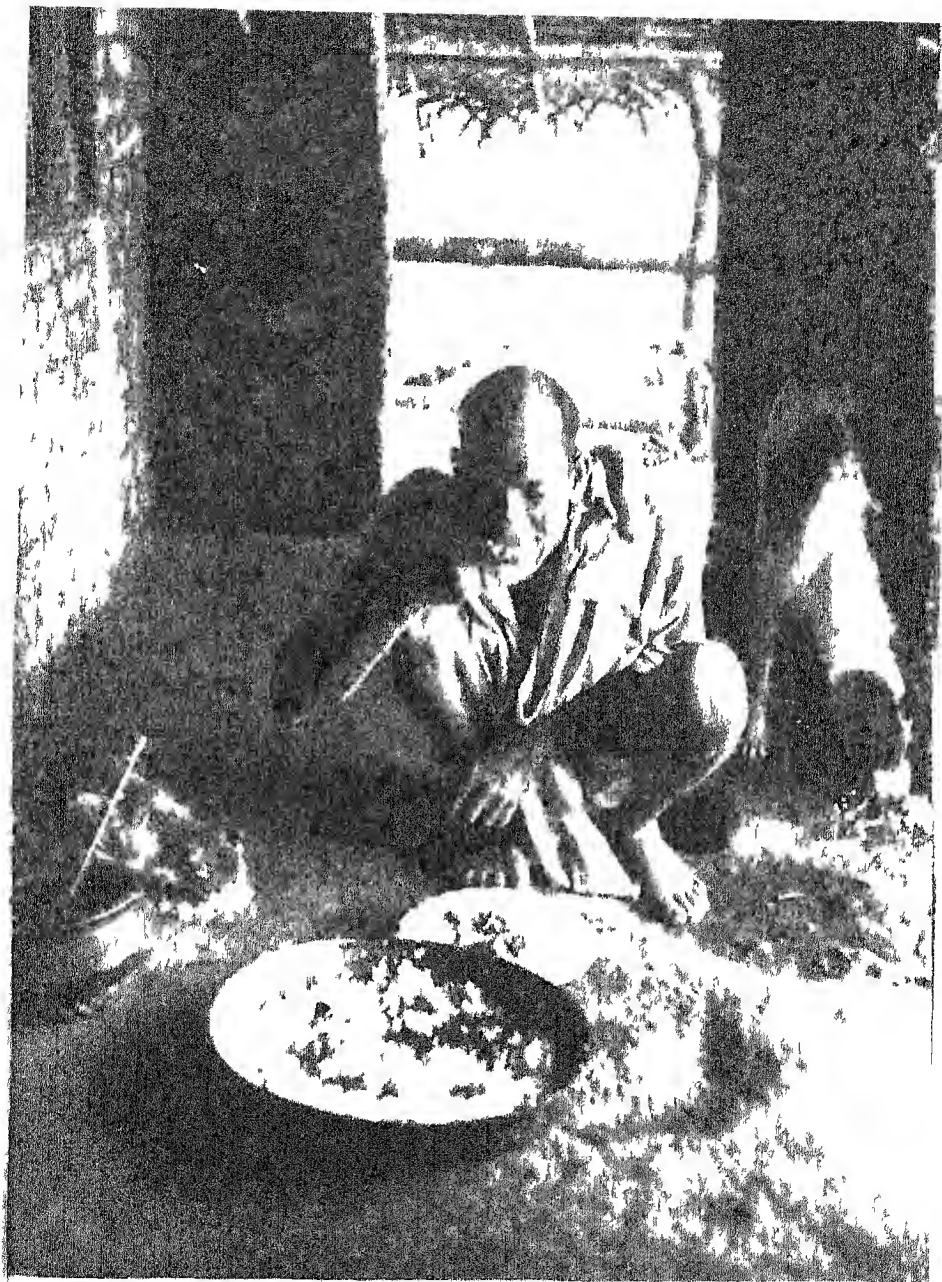
(a) the development of hydro-electric power,

(b) hiring and training technical skill,

(c) establishment or extension of light and heavy industries working for the home market.

(B) To raise the standards of education and health by the extension of the social services *pari passu* with the increase of production and thus to prepare the way for

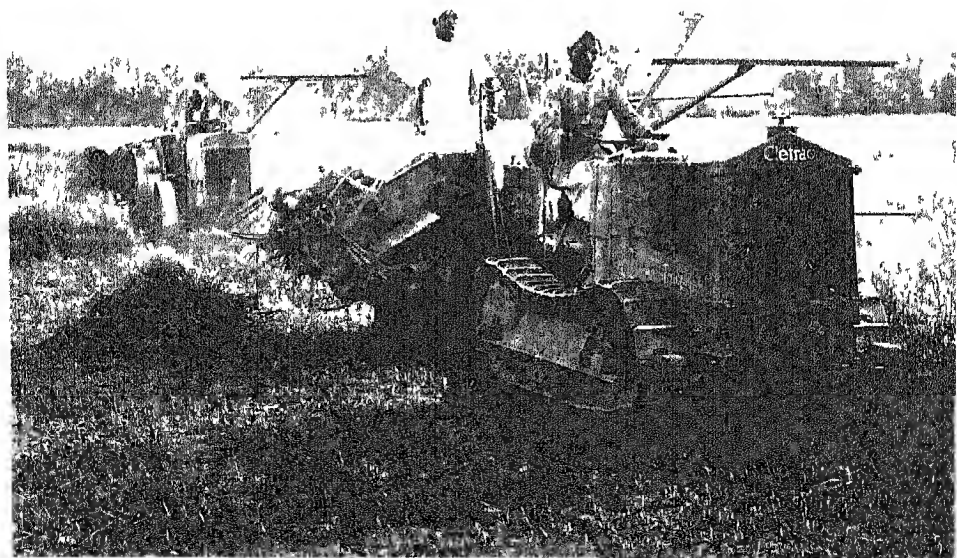
(C) Regulation of the Population through birth control.

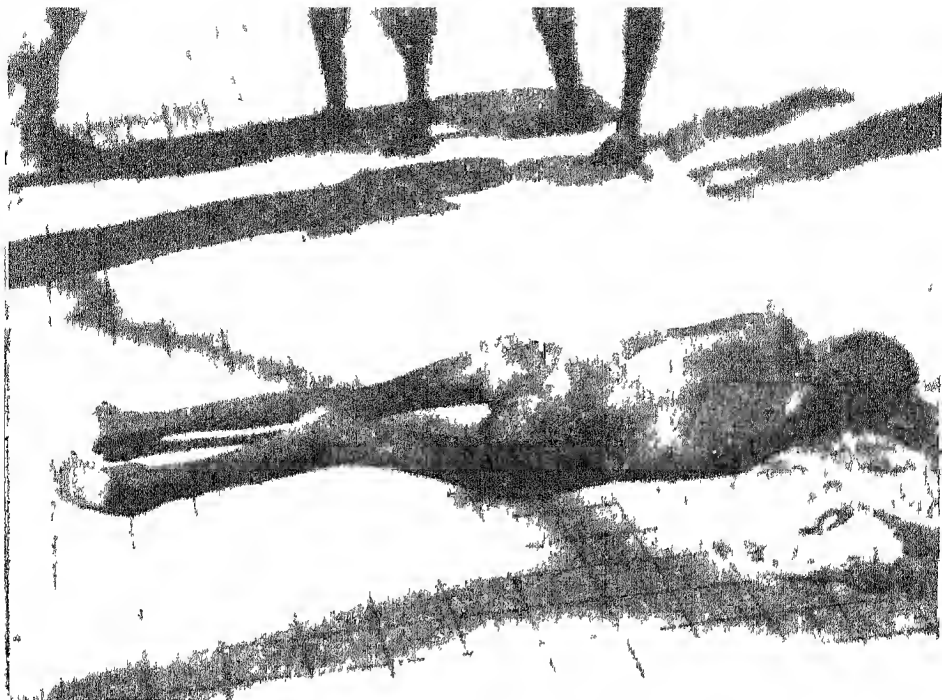


The Indian peasant shares a meal with his pets. Living under primitive conditions, he is typical of the millions of India

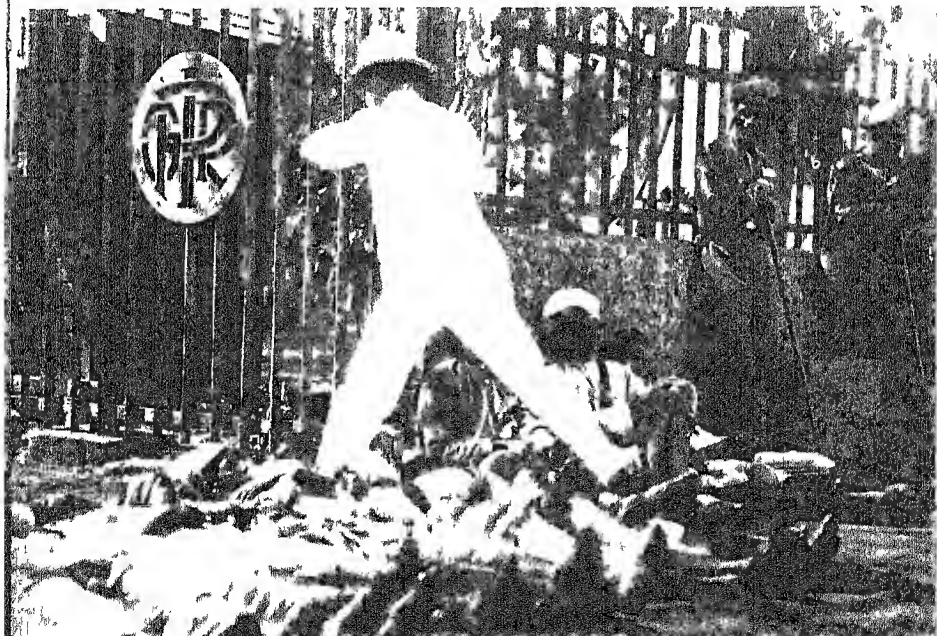


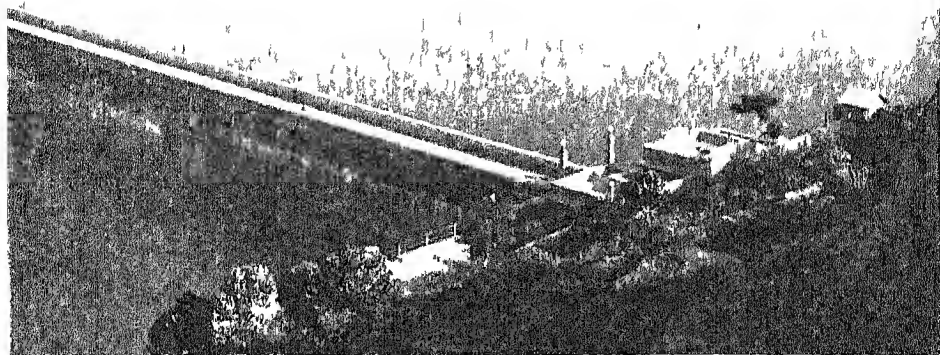
*(Above) A peasant family sets out to work in the fields.
(Below) New methods of agriculture - but they are still the exception rather than the rule.*





(Above) *Famine the tragedy of a backward agriculture*
(Below) *A let-down strike only Indians can solve the Indian problem*





(Above) Dams like this provide much needed irrigation and hydro-electric power

(Below) India still has great untapped resources of water power

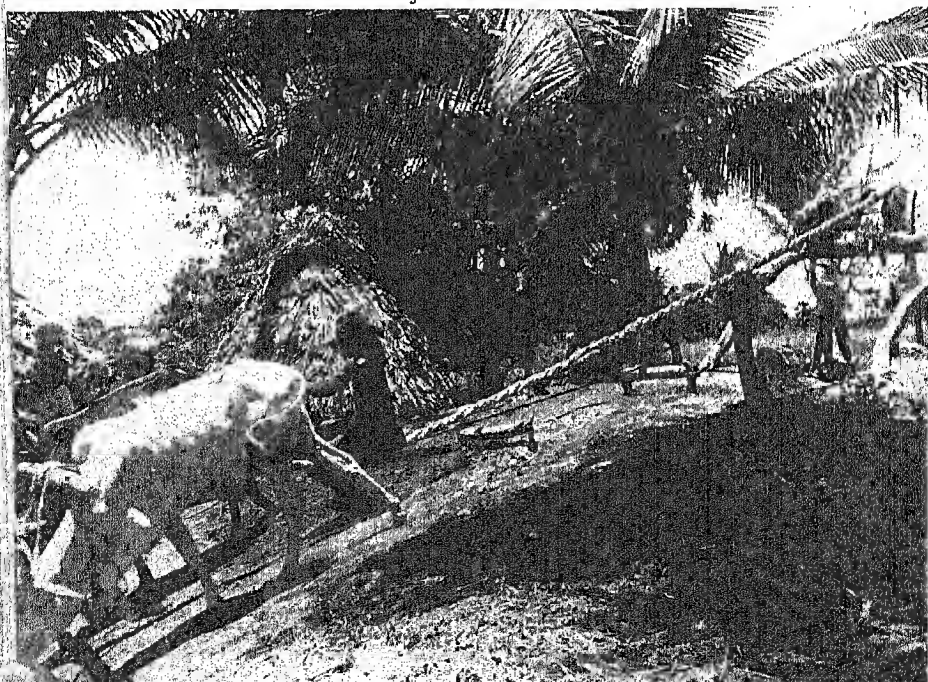


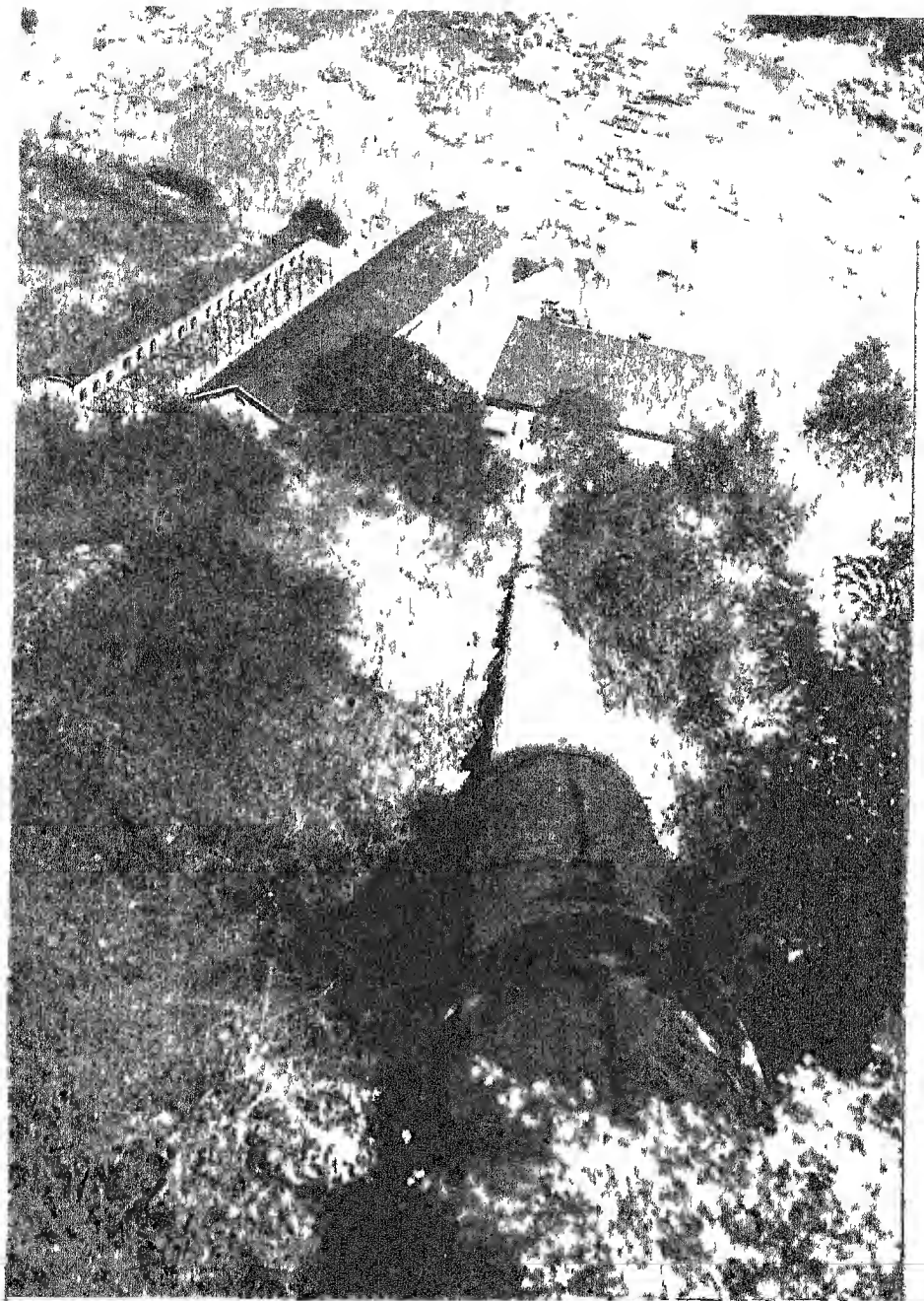


The traditional water-carrier of a dry and thirsty land.

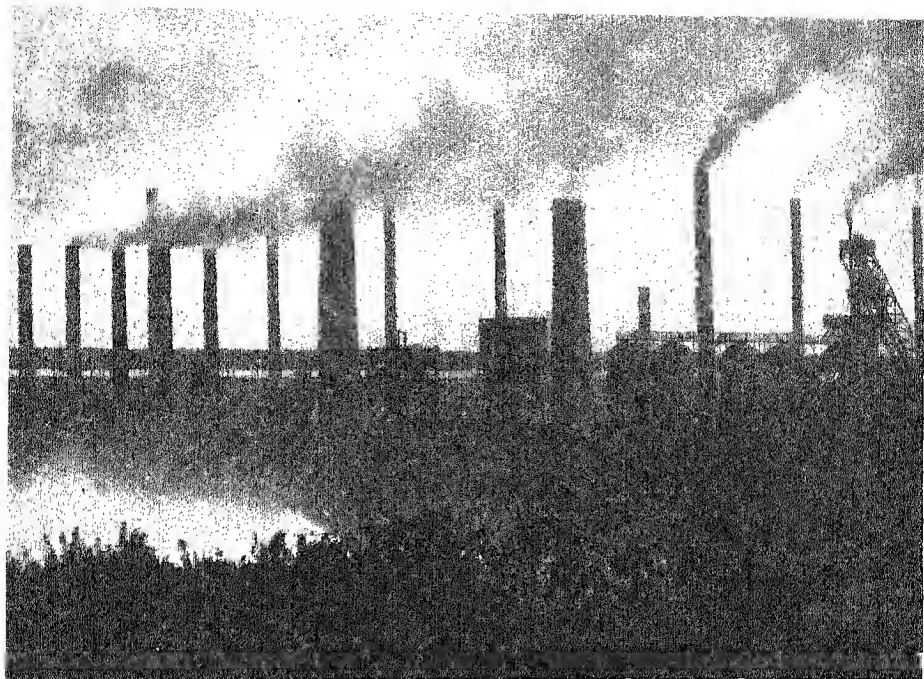


Though the cattle population of India is the highest in the world, milk consumption is the lowest. The bullocks "pull the plough, thresh the grain, raise the water from the well."

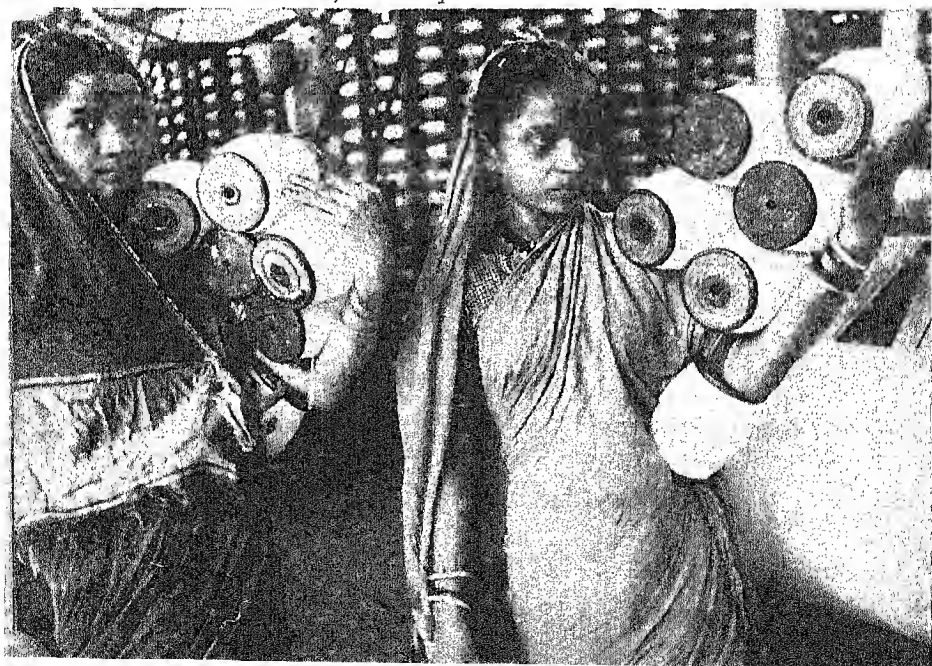


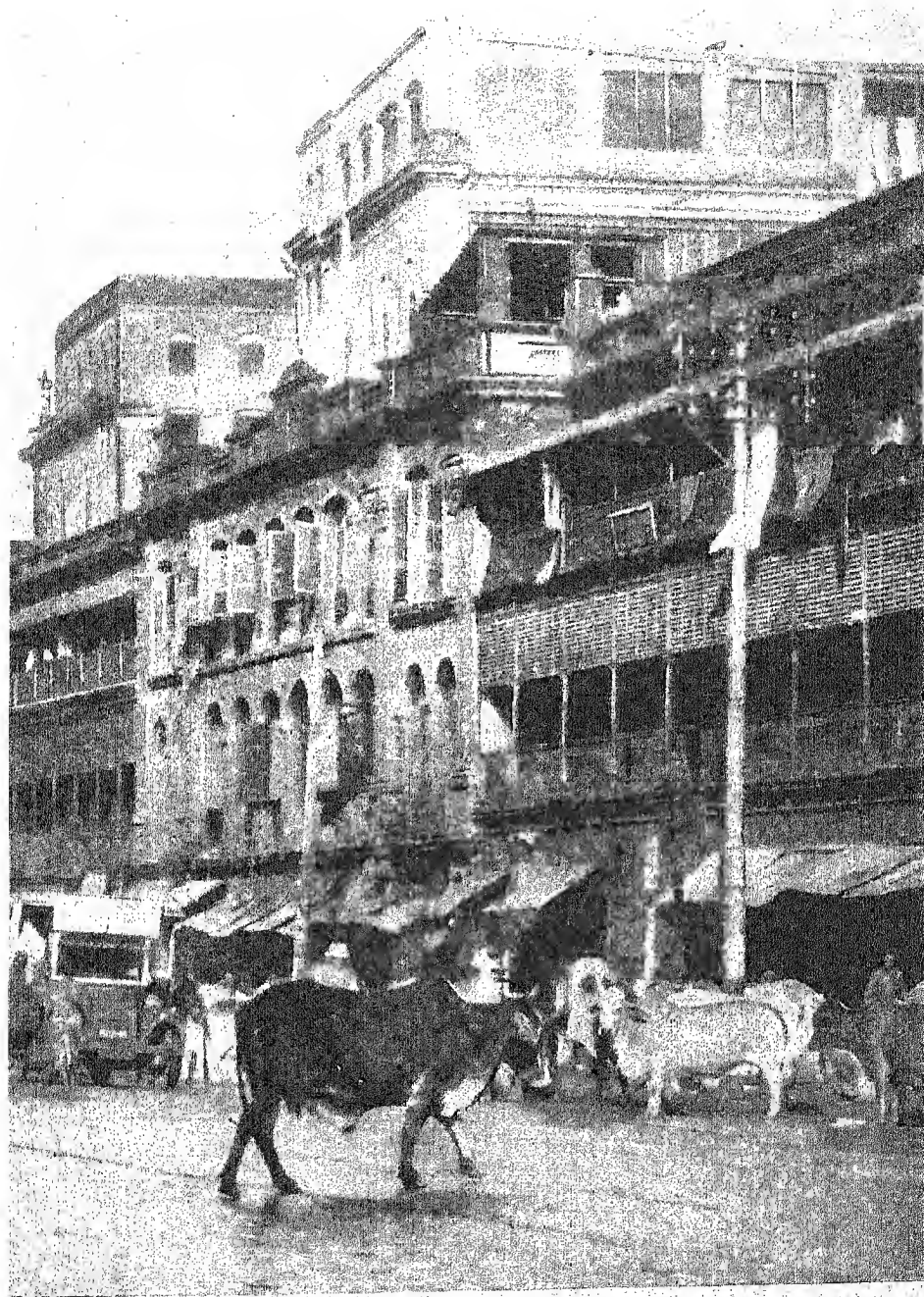


Power generated by Indian rivers will help to create the industrial India of the future



Already India has the Tata steel works, the largest in the world ; an increasing percentage of the population is occupied in a variety of industries, including textiles, as in the picture below.

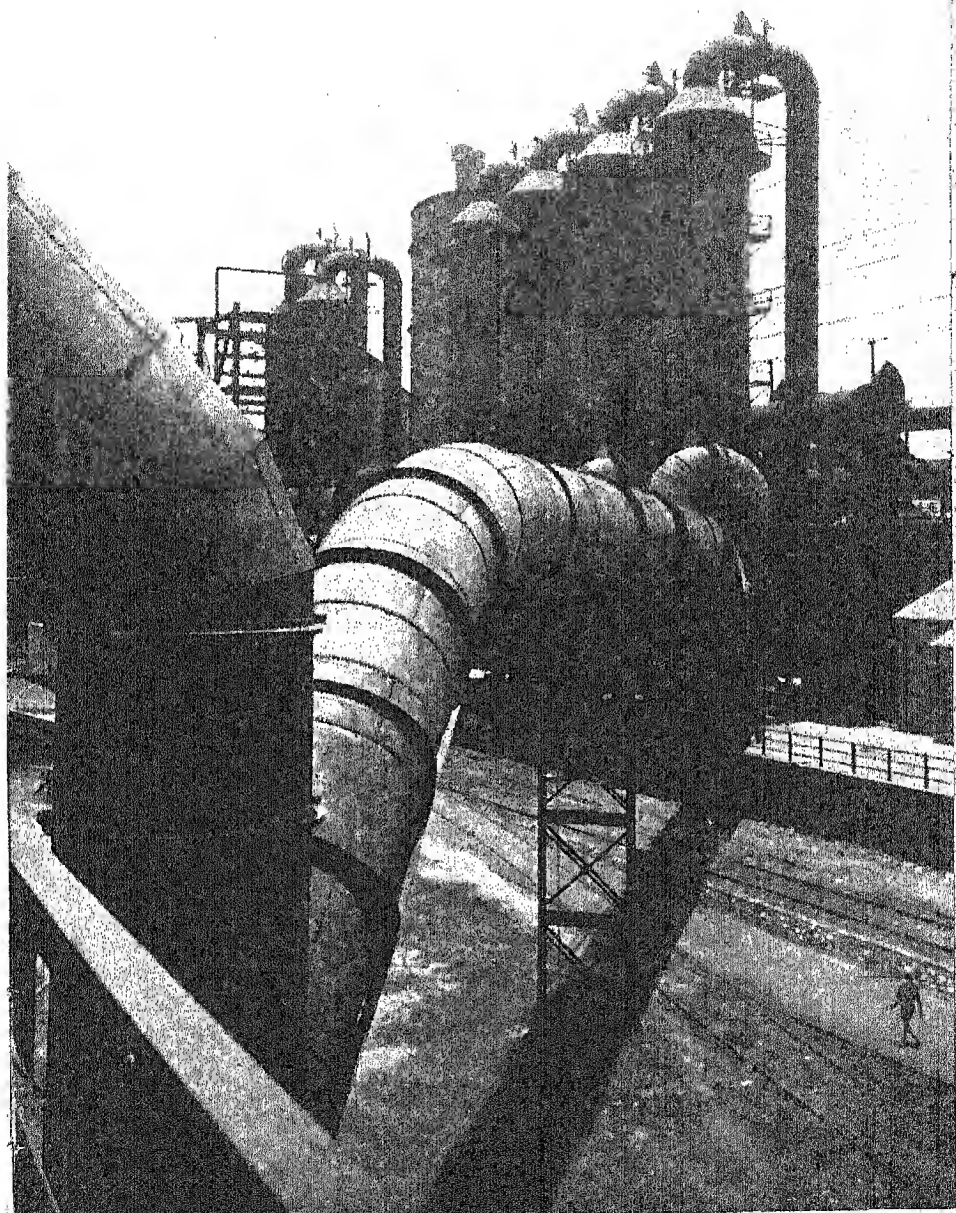




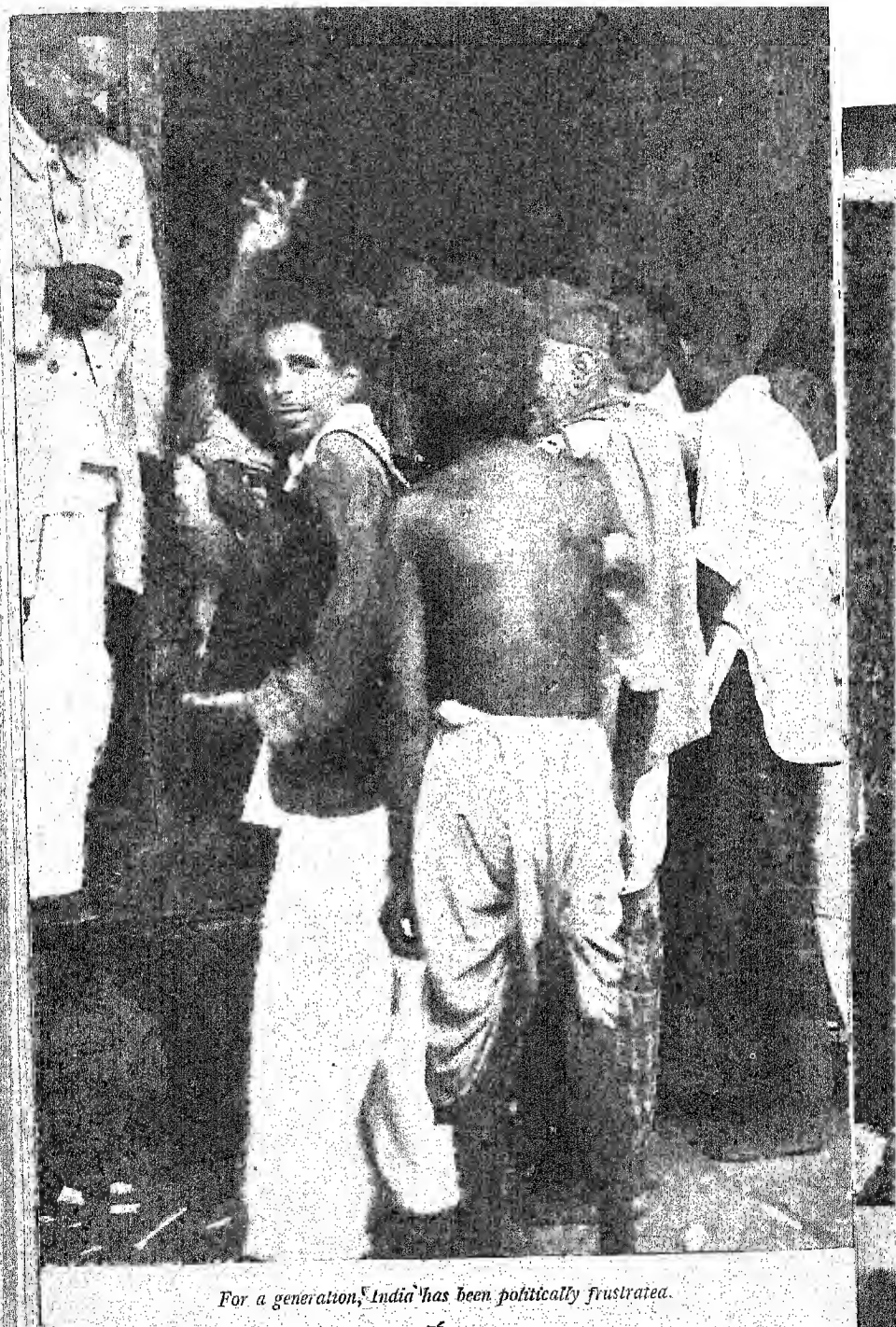
Old and new mix in the big cities : the cattle in this busy Calcutta street are sacred and can wander where they please.

The old India of elephants and Princes.



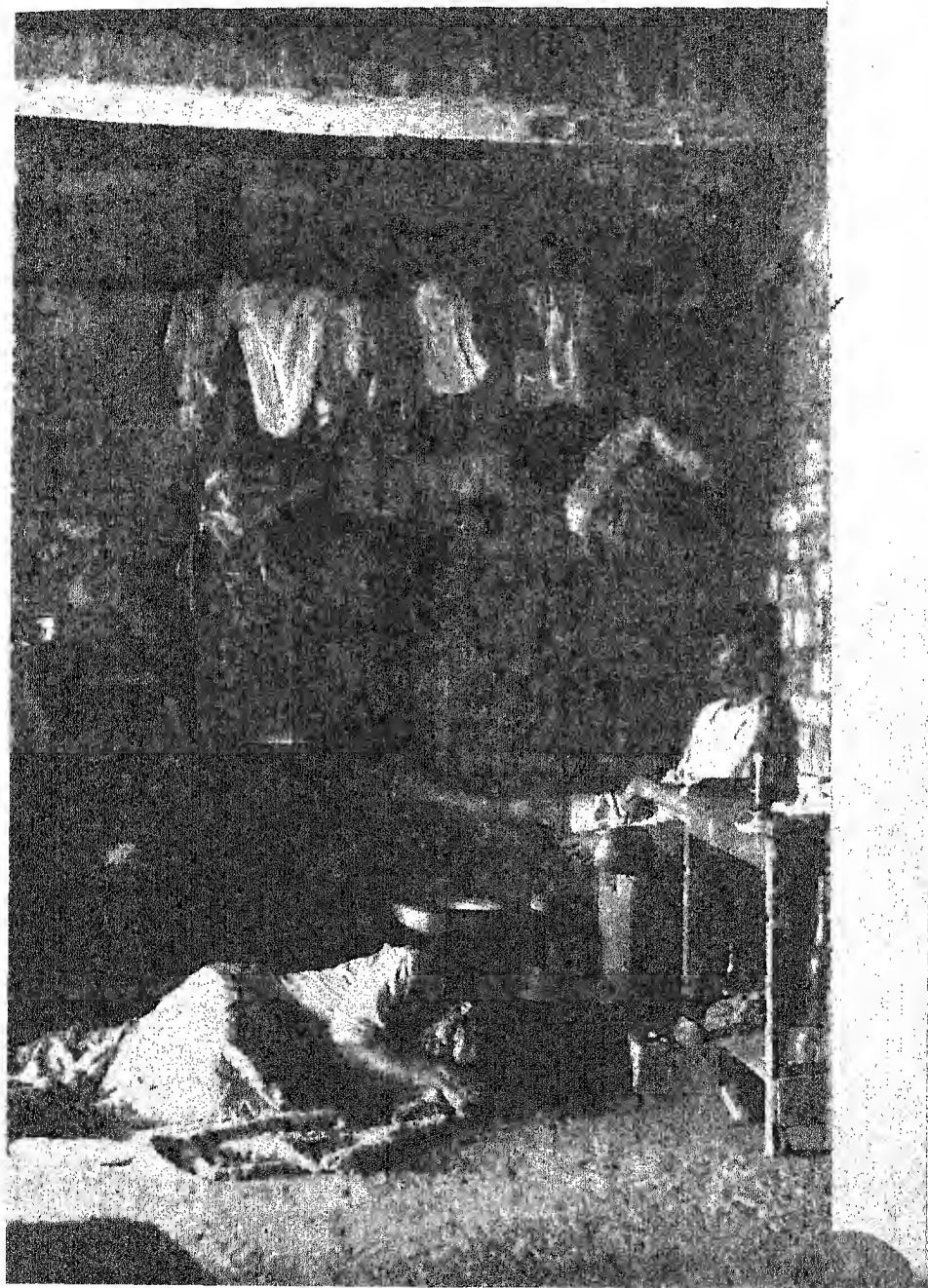


The new India : without heavy industry, the poverty-stricken masses cannot attain a higher standard of living.



For a generation, India has been politically frustrated.

With millions living in such conditions, there is inevitable unrest and discontent.





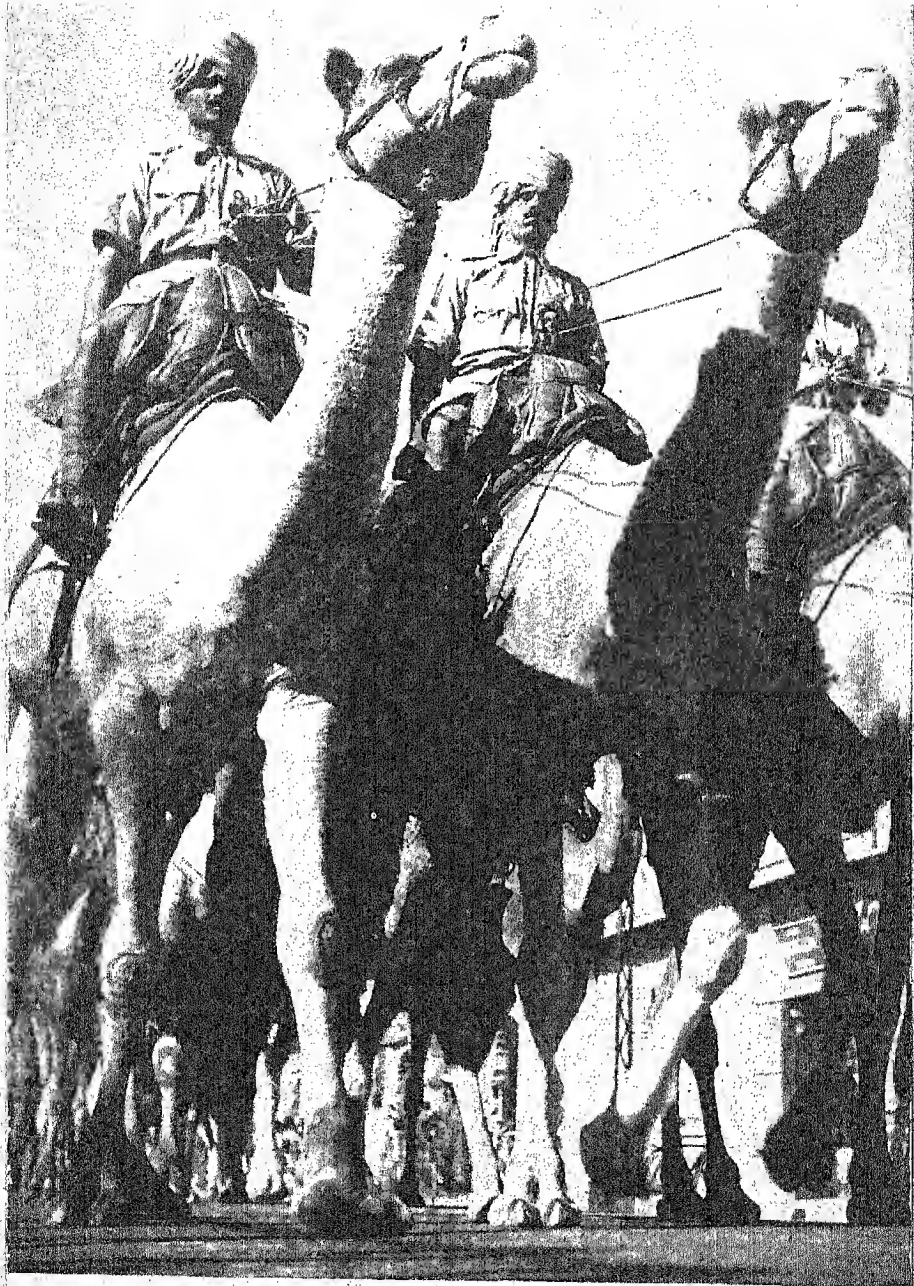
Indian leaders (1) Mahatma Gandhi, revered throughout India. Above, among his followers. Below at his recent meeting with Mr. Jinnah, leader of the Moslem League.





Indian Leaders (2) Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru, Harrow-educated Congress leader and outstanding intellectual of Indian Politics, with Sir Stafford Cripps. Below a section of a crowd at one of his meetings.





India like the whole of Asia, is on the march. We in Britain can help her, or hinder her, but we cannot stop her.

